



## Abstract

The goal of this dissertation is to develop a contextual theology of Filipino American diaspora identity focusing on the experience of two Bible study groups of Filipino American United Methodist Church members in Gateway North District, New Jersey.

This research project is a response to the mission potential and the problematic issues that accompany Filipino migration. Specifically, the study has focused on the crisis of cultural identity Filipino Americans are experiencing in migration life. The crisis is rooted in Filipinos' many years of being colonized and was further intensified in diaspora life as they struggle to find balance between the need to assimilate to their new home and the longing to preserve the culture they have brought from their homeland. Showing mission potential, Filipino migration poses a challenge to Filipino American churches to respond and reach out to their *kababayan* (fellow Filipinos) in ways that are relevant to their identity concerns. It is however important that in order for the church's mission to be socially relevant and scripturally based, it should start with theological reflections that are responsive of the crisis in question.

This study is mainly ethnographic in method but has also engaged in an integrated methodology of theological, demographic and historical research as well as contextual hermeneutics—all within the milieu of missiology. The main research methods used were participant observation, focus groups and interview. The focus group sessions were performed within the setting of Bible study meetings and the interviews were either done personally or in groups. The contextualization method used was an adaptation from Robert Schreiter's and William Dyrness' models of contextualization. This hermeneutical



method is a well established resource in the field of contextual theology. I, however, modified some parts of their model to better fit the theme and goal of my research better. My own contextualization model is divided into three sections: the observation level, the interpretation level, and the impact level. The observation level deals mainly with the collection of data while the interpretation and impact levels focus on data analysis. Another contextual theology principle that was used in this study is the principle of using a hermeneutical community—wherein the main process of doing contextualization has been shared with the participating community of faith.

At the end of the study, fourteen theological themes were articulated. These are: spirituality, two homes, adaptability, *damayan* (sharing), connection to homeland, courage, cultural preservation, morality, respect for the elderly, close familial ties, God's providence, cultural expression in worship, struggle for equality, and connectionalism. A motif that emerged in many of these themes is *home*. In the end, I used home as a metaphor to refer to the participants' homeland and unique cultural traits and perspectives they brought in their diaspora life. I have also developed the theology of home as an overarching theme that summarizes the findings and insights generated in this study.

I expect the contextual theology developed here to provide helpful insights to Filipino American churches—as the intended readers—to initiate developing Bible study materials that will deal with their own identity crisis, and mission tools for reaching out to their fellow Filipinos in diaspora.

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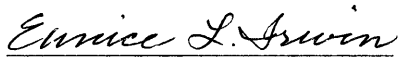
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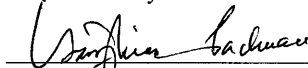
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**I wholeheartedly dedicate this dissertation to you.**

CHAPTER 1: *SCATTERED AND GATHERED*, AN INTRODUCTION

The temperature was 13 degrees when she arrived in Newark Airport at 11 o'clock in the evening without wearing any coat. From where she was standing, she saw some people waving at her and they were shouting a name she could not recognize. They are her cousins who came to pick her up, calling her in their typical New Jersey accent. She arrived at a house full of people ready to welcome her. They were all Filipinos who live near the house where she will live for the next two years.

After a short *pasyal* (tour) of New York and Atlantic City, she asked questions on opportunities where she can work part-time and her non-working tourist visa will not be considered an issue. A few days later, she found herself working as a caregiver for a bitter elderly lady who was not happy about seeing her church and community becoming multiethnic. After ingesting countless racist remarks, she finally gave up the job and worked as a babysitter. The pay is good and baby Nicole is fun to be with, but she was in so much pain every time she realized that she left her own baby in the care of someone else. Last night, she cried so hard in an Internet café when her two-year-old, Paulo, did not recognize her when she told him she is his mom. She turned off the Web cam and pretended that the connection was cut off because she did not want her husband to see the intense pain in her face.

Days passed and her homesickness worsened. As she waited frozen in a bus stop, she remembered how easily accessible public transportation is in the Philippines. As she listened for instructions from her *amo* (boss), her mind went back to a time when people waited for her instruction as a manager of a small family business she inherited from her mother. As she trekked from one yard sale to another, she remembered that in spite of her

average income in Manila, she could at least afford to buy new furniture for her house, but now she have to live on a tight budget in order to send money to her family, friends, and home church. Last week, she sent an extra \$200 because one of her uncles is in the hospital. Helping her relatives is now a definite responsibility because they know she is in the United States—a land flowing with dollars.

As days went by, she slowly came out of her barrio, community, into the mainstream society. She was increasingly shocked by the strange way people view God, morality, and the culture. She was appalled when she heard young people call their parents by their first name. She was saddened by how religion is marginalized in the country where her Wesleyan beliefs came from. She struggled whether she really want her children to grow up in such a liberal environment. In the Philippines, she has always upheld Filipino values, and she made sure her workplace respected them and her children learned from them, but now it is a different story. She struggled trying to decide whether she will keep her Filipino ways or assimilate to a culture that is not only unfamiliar to her but one she tried hard to avoid before. Seemingly, however, success means becoming more American and less Filipino. Her heart is constricted by guilt as she slowly compromised her principles, one after another.

Anticipating that a Filipino congregation will help keep her way of spirituality, she decided to attend a Filipino church. Surprisingly, she discovered that many Filipino churches have adapted to the American ways too well. The liturgy is familiar, but she immediately noticed that many of the Filipino components were removed and replaced with those that are more understandable to the church's American-born teenagers who are

somewhat clueless about their Filipino heritage. The worship format is American and the vernacular is English. The study materials were silent on the subject of migration.

One day, she looked through the stained-glass window of the church building and saw many unchurched Filipinos who probably were experiencing what she was going through. She deeply pondered what the church could do to help them.

This imaginary narrative is a collective reflection of the experiences of many Filipino Americans<sup>1</sup> to whom I have spoken. Anyone who has not experienced migrating to another country can catch a glimpse of what the first weeks of migration life feels like. Immigrants can, most likely, relate to some of the experiences I have just described. Filipino immigrants will probably transport back in time for a brief moment to their first few weeks of diaspora life in the United States, remembering the excitement, pain, sadness, uncertainty and fear they harbored for many days.

In six years of being an immigrant, I have witnessed various forms of diaspora concerns among Filipino communities that are residing in the United States. I am presently pastoring a United Methodist multiethnic congregation whose membership represents twenty nationalities and most of them have personally experienced migration. Among the immigrant groups in this congregation are ten Filipino families. Many of them are participants in this study. During the three years of pastoring this church, I have closely observed the various facets of diaspora life in the context of a faith community. Furthermore, I have seen how Filipinos learned to relate within a multiethnic setting.

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<sup>1</sup> Many scholars avoid what hyphenated cultural identity suggests, which is lesser status with Americans. An article released by Asian American Resource and Cultural Center (AARCC) in the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC), asserts, "The hyphen or the idea of being a 'hyphenated American' stems from the cultural context of the 40s and 50s in the U.S. when being 'hyphenated' connoted a lesser status in comparison to just being 'American.' The standard usage within Asian American political, journalistic, as well as academic contexts usually leaves out the hyphen" (Asian American Resource and Cultural Center, UIC 2007:1).

Being immersed in this environment gave me a clearer perspective of the lifestyle of the research participants in this study.

This study is basically ethnographic in method but has also used the methodology of theological, demographic and historical research as well as contextual hermeneutics. The main methods used are participant observation, focus group and interview. The contextualization model used was divided into three levels: the observation level, interpretation level, and impact level

The 32 participants in this study made up two Bible study groups of Filipino American United Methodist Church members in Gateway North District, New Jersey. Out of the 32, 13 are from First Filipino American United Methodist Church. The other 19 are from a multiethnic congregation called the United Methodist Church in Union. Twelve of the participants in the multiethnic group are Filipinos. The detailed description of the participants is indicated in Appendix A. The description includes their age, regional birthplace, years of residence in the United States., migrations status, and occupation.

The sampling procedure I used is purposive. The factors by which the participants were chosen were not random but instead connected to the problem and goal of the study. The complete explanation of the sampling procedure is in Appendix D.

I chose to study United Methodist Filipino communities because I am ordained under the United Methodist Church and I intend to remain in this denomination for the coming years. Furthermore, Filipino United Methodism in diaspora reflects very interesting identity issues that are rooted from its beginning years in the Philippines to its journey back to the United States from which the founding missionaries came.



The practical advantages of living in an economically advanced nation such as the United States are apparent, but the problems that accompany migration, such as limited job opportunity, family separation, racism and identity crisis are overwhelming to many of them. In view of this fact, I see an arena of mission and transformative potential through the church. I see the church as a mission agent that can effectively answer specific areas of this need. Thus, the concerns of Filipino diaspora can also be seen positively as a potential mission opportunity.

Generally, however, missiologists, mission agencies and churches have limited resources that specifically address the growing need of Filipino immigrants in the United States. The increasing Filipino diaspora concerns draw the attention of cultural theorists and sociologists. Some of them recognize that the most crucial issue confronting Filipino diaspora communities is identity crisis.

A local congregation as a mission agent can effectively respond to this need in various practical ways such as counseling, group studies, seminars, literatures, personal instructions, and cultural gatherings. In order for the church's action to be scripturally accountable and collectively effective, it needs to start with theological reflections that are biblically based and sensitive to the crisis mentioned. Thus, the objective of this research project was the development of a Filipino diaspora contextual theology that is responsive to and reflective of the concerns of Filipino immigrants who reside in the United States. The construction of this contextual theology carries a twofold recommendation: that the findings in this project may be used by Filipino immigrant churches as study material in dealing with the issue of identity crisis; and that the

findings of this research project may be used as practical mission tools for Filipino immigrant churches as they reach out to their *kababayan* (fellow Filipinos).

To be more accurate to the reality of the context studied, I have applied what many contextual theologians refer to as the hermeneutical community principle. In this study, the hermeneutical community was not only the population of my research but also functioned as fellow readers, interpreters, and theologians.<sup>2</sup> Through the research methods of participant observation, focus group and interview, I was able to identify elements that are essential in developing a contextual theology that is sensitive to the concerns of Filipinos in diaspora. In this chapter, I explain the background of the research problem and cite key theories that clarify the significance of the study. This chapter serves as the foundation where the theories in the succeeding sections—methodology, data, analysis and conclusion—are based.

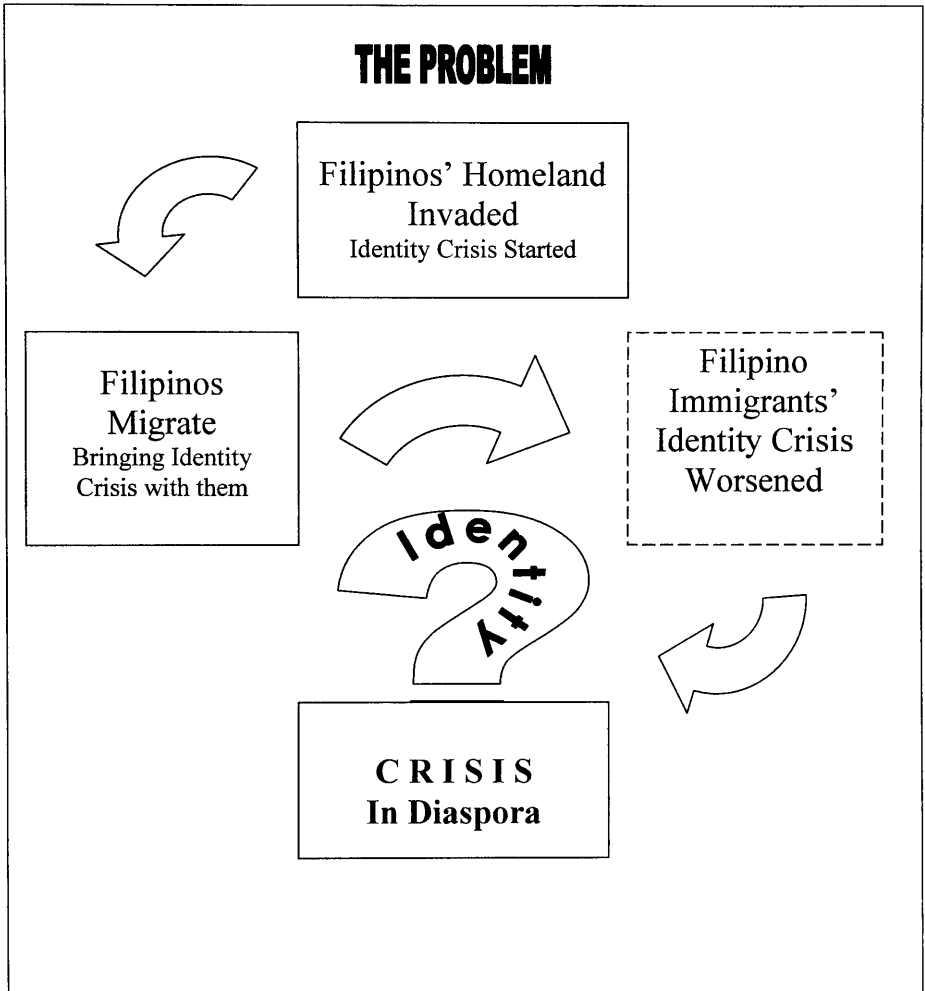
### Background of the Problem

Figure 1 entitled *The Problem* illustrates the general background of the problem of this study. The icon *Filipinos Homeland Invaded* represents the root cause of Filipinos' identity issues. As explained earlier, when Filipinos migrate, they carry a crisis of identity that is rooted in many years of being colonized. The icon *Filipinos Migrate* represents the migration of Filipinos—leaving their homeland and establishing a new home in diaspora land. *Filipinos Identity Crisis Worsened* represents the Filipino immigrants' inability to assimilate to their new home while keeping the culture they brought from their homeland. In the midst of this struggle, they developed a personal and

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Schreiter, in presenting the concept of hermeneutical community explains, "The experience of those in the small Christian communities who have seen the insight and the power arising from the reflections of the people upon their experience and the Scriptures, has prompted making the community itself the prime author of theology in local contexts" (Schreiter 1985:16).

communal predicament that I call the diaspora identity crisis—represented by the icon *question mark*.



**Figure 1: The problem.**

The following theories further explain the background of the research problem and demonstrate how the research problem was shaped by these theories and how the theories connect to each other through diaspora as the common connecting theme.

### What Is Diaspora?

From its original reference to the exile of the Jewish people in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and the exile in AD 135 by the Romans, the term Diaspora (capitalized) has now evolved into diaspora—currently used more broadly to refer to the experience of any dispersed communities, both their migration and their life beyond their national boundaries. Although migration is a phenomenon that has been taking place for thousands of years, the early stage of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has manifested a new and challenging phase of migration in all countries. Most recently, it has been noted in the context of cultural theory, as a social category, as a form of consciousness, as a mode of cultural production, or as a new kind of socio-political problem (Vertovec 2004:106-107). As a social consciousness, diaspora refers to “individuals’ awareness of a range of decentered, multi-location attachments, of being simultaneously ‘home away from home’ or ‘here and there’” (Vertovec 2004:106). Diaspora is a cultural concern, Steven Vertovec further elaborates, if “the fluidity of constructed styles and identities among diasporic people is emphasized” (2004:106). In some specific sections, I have used the term diaspora in a postcolonial sense. Bill Ashcroft, Garreth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, defining diaspora in a postcolonial context explicates, “Diaspora, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homeland into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization” (2000:68).

## Diaspora Phenomenon and Religion

Arguing for a new face of religion on a worldwide scale in the coming years, Philip Jenkins, highlights the contribution of mass migration and transborder structures to this emerging phenomenon. Focusing on how migration sets the trend of multiculturalism, Jenkins reports,

By 2000, the United States was home to 30 million immigrants, about 11 percent of the population. Over 13 million migrants arrived in the 1990s alone. Almost 5 percent of Americans have been in the country for a decade or less. American society is steadily moving from a Black and White affair to a multicolored reality.... Nearly 12 million more Americans were Asian, of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Korean stock. (2002:100)

Jenkins further argues that demographic changes such as multiculturalism “naturally have their religious consequences, since the new immigrant groups follow cultural patterns more akin to their home societies than to the host nations” (2000:97). Discussing the religious implications to both host and Asian homelands, Jenkins asserts, “In addition to strengthening Christian numbers in the United States, such migrant communities transmit American ideas to home countries, because of the constant interchange between Asian-American communities and their ancestral nations” (2000:102). Thus, the religious repercussions of this phenomenon can be viewed as a two way process.

Filipino migration is an example of this phenomenon. Historians recognize a “feedback relation” between diasporic Filipinos’ religious consciousness<sup>3</sup> and their diasporization: that Filipinos’ religious worldview plays a key role in their diasporic experience; and in their process of diasporization, they shaped a religious consciousness

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<sup>3</sup> Religious consciousness here refers to general culturally derived patterns of responsiveness to the Transcendent.

that is distinctive from their homeland.<sup>4</sup> For example, Steffi San Buenaventura, in a chapter he wrote entitled “Filipino Folk Spirituality and Immigration: From Mutual Aid to Religion” in the book *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans* (1999), discusses how Filipino religiosity contributed to forming the identity of early Filipino immigrants. Referring to early Filipino immigrants, San Buenaventura accounts that:

Through the instrument of their native mysticism they formed a mutual aid organization and shaped it into a socioreligious phenomenon: a stateside messianic movement that evolved in California in the mid-1920's, spread to Hawaii in 1928, and was introduced in the 1930's in the Philippines, where it became an established, albeit a minor religious sect. (San Buenaventura 1999:53)

This example also reflects Filipinos' characteristic of engaging in theological and spiritual reflections in times of diaspora. Moreover, this social phenomenon suggests the missiological relevance of the church's theology on Filipinos' diasporic experience.

### Filipino Diaspora

Connecting the earlier explanation of diaspora, the idea of Filipino diaspora, according to Luis Pantoja, is a “descriptive term in reference to the reality of people from the Philippines being dispersed to foreign lands” (Pantoja 2004b:xxxiv). According to the 2002 census done by Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), “Overseas Filipinos now number more than 7.58 million in more than 192 countries and destinations” (Commission on Filipinos Overseas 2002). Amador Remegio reported that “each day, around 2000 Overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) fly out of the Philippines as exported labor” (Remegio 2004:21). Sadly, crossing the border is the ultimate solution an average

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<sup>4</sup> It is also important to mention here that spiritual reflection in migration context has been a practice of Filipinos even before colonial times. This period was marked by successive waves of migration within the country's 7,000 islands and from outside the archipelago, mostly from other Asian islands. These movements carry various interchange and exportation of spiritual beliefs.

Filipino can think of in coping with an economic system that fails to provide equal opportunity and just wages for them. The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2002 *Ulat ng Bayan* [Report of the Nation] Pulse Asia Survey reports that “one out of five Filipinos wants to leave the country and stay abroad, indicating that there will be no let-up in the mass exodus of Filipinos that we have seen in the past few decades” (Dimapilis-Baldoz 2004:39). In the United States alone, “the Philippines ranked third behind Mexico and China in annual numbers of immigrants in the United States,” between 1990 and 2000 (Azada 2002:130).

Focusing on the positive situation of Filipino immigrants in the United States, “Filipino-Americans have been rated as having the highest per capita income among all Asian-American groups. One major reason is that a good number of Filipino-Americans are highly educated professionals”<sup>5</sup> (Dimapilis-Baldoz 2004:43). Moreover, comparing the United States with other host countries, it “provides residency arrangements to their migrant workers, where the migrants, after a certain number of years working in their countries, will be able to live as citizens” (Remegio 2004:10). Extensive avenues for saturation and assimilation provided in western countries like the United States is one essential factor in determining the unique characteristics of Filipino diasporic people in the United States, as contrasted with Filipino immigrants in Asian or Middle Eastern countries. In spite of these positive factors, however, many crises in Filipino migration remained unanswered.

The whole phenomenon of Filipinos’ massive migration carries crucial ramifications both for the homeland and the diaspora—culturally, socio-politically,

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<sup>5</sup> In spite of a high percentage of degree holders in the Philippines, the unstable economy cripples the system that is supposed to facilitate employment opportunities. Thus, some people are motivated to pursue education for the specific purpose of going abroad.

economically, and most of all missiologically. For the homeland, brain-drain syndrome, family separation, cultural deconstruction and vulnerability of one's nationalism are some of the problematic issues that demand attention. In the diaspora terrain, crucial issues such as international human rights, exploitation, racism, marginality, identity crisis, deprivation, and lack of participation in homeland socio-political shaping, are some of the concerns raised by Filipino diaspora scholars. In addition to these difficulties, the effects of cultural transition have placed many Filipino immigrants in an emotional crisis known to clinicians as adjustment disorders.<sup>6</sup>

### The Changing Face of Assimilation

Assimilation is an important subject of study among social sciences especially since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when migration has demonstrated a fast and challenging trend in many nations. Brown states that assimilation:

is the process by which the characteristic of members of immigrant groups and host societies come to resemble one another. That process, which has both economic and sociocultural dimensions begin with the immigrant generation and continues through the second generation. (Brown 2006:1)

Many social theorists are starting to recognize the unsuitability of classical assimilation theories with the contemporary traits of immigrants. Brown remarks,

Classic assimilation theory sees immigrant/ethnic and majority groups following a "straight-line" convergence, becoming more similar over time in norms, values, behaviors, and characteristics. This theory expects those immigrants residing the longest in the host society, as well as the members of later generations, to show greater similarities with the majority group than immigrants who have spent less time in the host society. (2006:2-3)

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<sup>6</sup> Juliana Sustento-Seniriches, a practicing doctor in California, identifies precipitants to adjustment disorders that commonly applies to Filipino immigrants: "(1) losses experienced in the immigration process, including loss of status and financial security; (2) changes in the traditional male-female roles; (3) discrepancy in acculturation between first-generation and American-born later generations; (4) shame-evoking situations in the workplace; (5) ignorance of the country's laws of cultural norms; and (6) illegal immigration status" (Sustento-Seniriches 1997:107).



Another scholar comments that straight-line assimilation “portrayed the group level process of assimilation as primarily a function of generational replacement. Each subsequent generation was considered to be one step further removed from their culture of origin and one step closer to becoming completely American” (Greenman and Yu 2006:15). This theory have been criticized as “‘Anglo-conformist’ because immigrant groups were depicted as conforming to unchanging, middle-class, white Protestant values” (Brown 2006:3). This standard has negatively depicted many cases of assimilation as incomplete without affixing any of them to factors within the host society. Critics pointed to factors that demand serious consideration such as:

poor urban schools, cut off access to employment and other opportunities—obstacles that often are particularly severe in the case of the most disadvantaged members of the immigrant groups. Such impediments can lead to stagnant or downward mobility, even as the children of other immigrants follow divergent paths toward classic straight-line assimilation. (Brown 2006:4)

Social theorists have other reasons for seeing classical assimilation theory as unfit for current migration terrain. For example, “the experiences of today’s immigrants, who are primarily from Asia and Latin America, are not adequately represented by theories of assimilation derived from the experiences of earlier waves of European immigrants” (Greenman and Yu 2006:5). Another factor is the personal preference of immigrants to preserve their cultural heritage more than the goal to assimilate. Brown observes, “Heavily disadvantaged children of immigrants may even reject assimilation altogether and embrace attitudes, orientations, and behaviors considered ‘oppositional in nature.’ More advantaged groups may sometimes embrace traditional home-country attitudes and use them to inspire their children to achieve” (2006:4).

As a result of this unsuitability, recent scholars came up with alternative theories such as the “segmented assimilation theory.” This theory asserts, “The United States is a stratified and unequal society, and therefore different segments of society are available for immigrants to assimilate into” (Greenman and Yu 2006:8). Furthermore, segmented assimilation theory “points to the context in which immigrants assimilate, the socioeconomic status of the immigrant family, and the strength of the parent-child relationship as crucial intervening variables determining the effect of assimilation for children” (2006:9). Such theories are important breakthroughs in giving attention to specific socioeconomic contexts of immigrants as they are assessed on their assimilation performance. The knowledge is not only generally informative but it is liberating for those who have been given inferior portrayals by old assimilation graphs in the past.

Social theories that emphasize the value of contexts affirm my research goal of developing a contextual theology out of the cultural context of Filipino immigrants. Thus, rather than putting much effort in determining and comparing the assimilation levels of the participants, I focused my investigation in understanding the various contexts that led each of them to their current assimilation point. As explained in the segmented assimilation theory, charting the participants’ assimilation performance according to their duration of stay or their economic improvement is unreasonable. No one standard analyzes the assimilation level of all the participants. For example, some participants who have been in the United States for more than 10 years have progressed slowly in their finances, while others who came recently, quickly earned savings and were able to assimilate immediately into the American middle class standard of living. The first group has vocations with degree transcripts that are not honored in the United States (e.g.

engineering). The second group consists of immigrants in the medical field—nurses, physical therapists, medical technicians, and pharmacists—with degrees that are honored in the United States. In fact, among Filipino immigrants, nurses among them are commonly known to be economically competent.

Another factor is that some of the participants' prefer to preserve their cultural ways and stay in their safe Filipino barrio community instead of venturing out to assimilate. One manifestation is seen in how some of them prefer an all-Filipino congregation instead of joining an Anglo or multicultural congregation. Church preference is an important factor in understanding the participants' assimilation experience.

Another manifestation of individual preference is parenting. Some implement the typical Filipino cultural trait of strict parenting while other parents try to assimilate to the methods of Western parenting. These decisions have intense ramifications to the American-born children of Filipino parents in the way the children themselves assimilate to the American culture. These examples also show the key role of individual preference in determining the immigrants' assimilation performance.

### Diaspora Contextual Theology

Stephen B. Bevans in his book, *Models of Contextual Theology*, recognizes elements of “cross-pollination” in contextualization in what he calls the Synthetic Model. Emphasizing the verity of culture encounters, Bevans emphasizes that the proponents of the Synthetic Model:

reach out to the resources of other contexts and other theological expressions for both the method and the content of its own articulation of faith. In this way there develops a synthesis between one's own cultural point of view and the points of view of others as well” (1992:89-90).

Thus, synthetic contextualizers emphasize the significance of interculturalization, assimilation, transnational structures and the whole process of intercultural dialogue in forming theologies. Bevans further asserts that this model, “makes an effort to make theologizing an exercise in true conversation and dialogue with the other so that *one’s own and one’s culture’s identity can emerge in the process* [emphasis mine]” (1992:94).

Diaspora theology,<sup>7</sup> fitting suitably in this model, accommodates these issues and provides an arena for theological expression—in the same way as the discipline of contextual theology acts as a theological transmitter for the concerns of the diaspora communities to be heard. Diaspora theology is properly positioned as a type of contextualized theology, under what Bevans calls the Synthetic Model. Furthermore, diaspora theology recognizes the growing trend in various theological disciplines that value the increasing multiculturalism in the United States. Segovia argues,

Indeed, as Christianity becomes more and more global, more and more non-Western Christians continue to find their way into the West, and as more and more non-Western Christians continue to enter the ranks of the discipline within the Western itself, the angle of vision afforded by such a web of diasporic experiences will be increasingly applied to what I regard as the different dimensions constitutive of the discipline at this point in its history. (Segovia 2000:23)

Furthermore, diaspora theology, as explained by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher in his book *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, “challenges the virtual capitulation to the normative status of nationalism as the only viable context for Christian theology and Christian social existence” (Smith-Christopher 2002:8). Diaspora theology breaks from the perimeters set

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<sup>7</sup> The term, *diaspora theology* is used in this study as a type of contextual theology that deals specifically with the phenomenon, consciousness and cultural shaping of a community in dispersion across nation-states. The term points to the whole contextual theologizing process and the ultimate research goal of producing specifically a Filipino diaspora theology.

by conventional theologies and sees the rich theological horizon beyond the confines of fixed sociocultural setting. It sees the Scriptures as a collection of diaspora stories where God becomes part of the experience and formation of diaspora communities. Crossing borders is an experience that has significant parallelism with many biblical stories. In other words, in spite of the experience of displacement, theological reflection is still obtainable for the transborder interpreters through diaspora theology.

Diaspora is closely related to postcolonial discourses because they share the same theoretical and sociopolitical underpinnings. Examples of issues and themes that are common to both diaspora and postcolonial studies are ethnicity, transnational formation, globalization, assimilation, slavery, nationalism, forced dislocation, hybridism, and religious revivalism.

Diaspora study also encounters terrains of religious studies. Drawn by the rich theological possibilities entrenched in diaspora study, some scholars of religion employ it as an effective theological/hermeneutical tool in both theologizing the “diasporic” facets of Christian culture and expanding the socio-cultural make up of theology. In the same way, the importance of social location in mission theology eventually gave rise to other “diaspora sensitive” contextual theologies, articulated in diverse discourses such as immigrant theology, refugee theology, settler theology, and exilic theology. In short, the condition of dislocation has become an avenue for contextual theologizing.

### Diaspora and Postcolonial Study

Postcolonialism carries diverse and complicated meanings and is further expanded by various scholars. The definition of Robert Young fits the theme of my study. He maintains first and foremost that postcolonialism “names a politics and philosophy of

activism that contests the disparity and so continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past” (2003:4). This implies that postcolonial study recognizes the current manifestation of imperial power through neocolonial schemes such as global capitalism. He further asserts that:

Postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledge into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different people of the world. (2003:7)

R. S. Sugirtharajah argues that postcolonialism is “an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practice which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects” (1998:17). In context of migration, postcolonialism, “asserts not just the right of African, Asian and Latin American peoples to access resources and material well-being, but also the dynamic power of their cultures that are now intervening in and transforming the societies of the west.” (Young 2003:4).

Thus, previously colonized nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are generally regarded sometimes as postcolonial. Bill Ashcroft, Garreth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin explain that “the term ‘postcolonial state’ has often been used by historians, economists and political theorists as a synonym for ‘post-independence state’. Its formation after independence is the clearest signal of the separation of the colonized from the imperial power” (2000:193). With this description, the Philippines and its citizens can be considered postcolonial. As a political theory, postcolonialism goes beyond a fixed political system and is seriously concerned with “developing the driving ideas of a political practice morally committed to transforming the conditions of exploitation and poverty in which large sections of the world’s population live out their daily lives”

(Young 2003:5). Generally, people groups who live in the postcolonial epoch also carry a postcolonial consciousness. This is true in many diaspora communities.

One of the main pillars of diaspora study is its critique of colonial and neocolonial structures. Although diaspora events have other factors such as war, famine, natural calamities, trade, learning, and profession, many of them are connected with the most prevailing factor—colonialism. Cultural theorists recognize the fact that the central contributing cause of diaspora phenomena is imperialism—both during eras of colonization and the current neocolonial epoch of global capitalism.

Fernando Segovia asserts that diasporic studies are “a subdiscourse within the discursive framework of Postcolonial Studies” (2000:14). He calls attention to the interrelation of postcolonial studies and diaspora studies in the framework of biblical criticism in postmodernity. Drawing a short timeline review of both of their emergence, Segovia argues, “Once the discourse of the postcolonial began to be deployed in biblical criticism, it was only a matter of time before the subdiscourse of the diasporic would be invoked as well, especially in the light of drastic changes at work within criticism itself” (2000:14).

He further argues that “at the core of imperial/colonial phenomenon, indeed through all its various stages, lies the reality of the experience of the diasporic phenomenon: unsettlement, travel, re-settlement” (2000:14). Eleazar S. Fernandez, drawing a theological analogy between the Babylonian Empire and the global empires of today, says:

Conquered, colonized and exploited, the Israelites were then dispersed. Diaspora usually follows after conquest and colonization. Many of the dispersed colonials end up as colonized minorities in the heart of the

empire. As is evident with racial minorities in the U.S., the Israelites became colonized minorities in Babylon. (2002:32)

He adds, “Imperial powers, for various reasons, draw the subjugated and marginalized peoples not only into their orbit, but also into their heartlands” (2002:35). In a different work, specifically referring to Filipinos in the United States, Fernandez stresses:

Their presence in the U.S. is an outcome of the globalization phenomenon. Globalization, both in its earliest and latest expressions, has led to the marginalization of the Philippines—economically, politically, culturally.... With this peripheralization, it is not surprising that Filipinos often make their way into the socioeconomic centers of the world. Globalization has created a diaspora people (2003:94).

Bill Ashcroft, Bill, Garreth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin assert, “The disruptive and disorienting experience of dislocation becomes a primary influence on the regenerative energies in a post-colonial culture” (2000:74). He adds that “it is against this dislocating process that many modern decolonizing struggles are instituted” (2000:75).

Consequently, postcolonial theories birthed and shaped key concepts in diaspora study, and in some aspects, vice versa. Thus, the study of diaspora removed from the framework of postcolonialism fosters a sense of decontextualization and is in danger of drawing deficient or inaccurate conclusions. Employing postcolonial tools in this study will hence illumine my attempt to create a contextualized theology on diaspora.

### Identity Crisis

The term *identity* connotes both the psychological property of selfhood and the characteristics of cultural groups. The interrelations of these two categories are evident in some parts of this research especially in portions where identity crisis is specifically discussed. Erik Erikson, discussing the dual nature of identity in context of the crisis, remarks, “We cannot separate personal growth and communal change, nor we can



separate the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crises in historical development because the two help to define each other and are truly relative to each other” (1968:23). He further elaborates the complexity of the twofold characteristic of identity saying, “we deal with a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities” (1968:22).

The factor on which this study focused was communal culture rather than the aspect of individual personal growth. The usage of the term *identity* in this study is focused on the concept that is “treated more sociologically, emphasizing the individual’s social and cultural surroundings, and the mechanisms of socialization and cultural acquisition” (Byron 1996:292).

Although the usage of the term identity crisis refers to a pathological condition, it, nonetheless, recognizes the positive profit it brings. Erikson recognizes that the concept of identity crisis “is now being accepted as designating a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation” (1968:16). In diaspora life for example, after a period of crisis, immigrant groups discover a bicultural pose that reflects both the cultural identity of their homeland and their new home. This discovery leads a cultural group to communal healing, development, and creation of a new uniqueness. This process of transformation and discovery is the groundwork of the diaspora contextual theology formed in this research project.

## Postcolonial Diasporic Identity

Based on the separate definitions of *postcolonialism*, *diaspora*, and *identity*, the term refers to the distinctive characteristic of an ethnic group that is going through a diasporic experience that is essentially caused by imperial forces. Describing the unity of the concept, *postcolonial diasporic identity*, Brooker interprets that postcolonial study shows how colonialism/neocolonialism causes:

the emergence of concepts describing a double, conflicted, and transitional condition such as hybridity, syncretism, the concept of diaspora and of metaphors of migrancy, crossings and borders. This thinking has been brought to bear particularly on the question of identity and thus on conceptualizations of race and ethnicity. (1999:193)

Seeing diaspora identity as a postcolonial concern is a recognition of the role of colonial and neocolonial structures in creating diasporic societies and identities.

One imperative concern in diaspora study is the argument between the need for assimilation and the commitment to preserve one's identity. Reflecting on the dynamics involved in this tension, Peter Brooker asserts:

recent writings on this theme from within cultural studies have proposed that the term [diaspora] be 'decoupled' from an actual or desired common homeland and understood instead, in a more poststructuralist vein, to describe a dynamic network of communities without the stabilizing allusion to an original homeland or essential identity. (1999:71)

Many diasporic movements seek to find a balanced position in the midst of this debate. Nevertheless, even if diaspora scholarship is placed in a "balance beam," how to articulate such balance in specific cases is still an immense riddle to many—especially to immigrant grassroots themselves.

In the Filipino diaspora context for example, the opposite pulls of preservation and assimilation create a new generation of identity seekers. Centuries of colonization

and a lack of articulation of what is a Filipino American, according to Maria P. Root, created a Filipino diasporic people whose “young people are subject to using the template by which people struggle with racial identity in a limited, monoracial paradigm” (Root 1997:87). The result is the denial of “their Filipino heritage [for them] to be accepted and fit with their white peers” (1997:87). Thus, in the midst of this cultural labyrinth that diaspora has created, there are many “who [are] at the risk of either rejecting being Filipino or absorbing some other identity that is articulated more clearly for them” (1997:88).

### The Filipino Church in Diaspora

In this section, I intend to present the missiological implications of the Filipino church being in diaspora. The book, *Scattered: The Filipino Global Presence*, is a compilation of materials that provide insightful reasons why the phenomenon of Filipino diaspora can be seen as a missiological occasion. This highly inspiring and instructive book reflects on innovative ways that the Filipino church in diaspora can be a mission agent that will be responsive to the needs of diaspora communities. The book provides a challenging message to Filipinos scattered along “today’s Babylonia” to consider their global presence as a divine opportunity to redeem themselves from being “homeless” exiles to being effective transnational evangelists. Pantoja writes, “God scatters the Filipinos and by his providential hand utilizes their displacement to accomplish some good for the country and for God’s kingdom” (2004a:89)

One of the main theories of this study lies in the foundational premise that the Filipino church in diaspora will be more effective in reaching their *kababayan* (fellow Filipinos) and will be a more effective witness in the midst of a pluralistic society, if it

addresses the predicament with which most peoples in diaspora are currently struggling with—identity crisis.

Coming from an entangled cultural mindset due to centuries of colonization, and being brought up in many ways by a “non-indigenous gospel,” Filipino Christians in migration experience additional crises that are interrelated to their already existing crisis on identity.<sup>8</sup> Thus, for these Filipino Christians to be more effective witnesses to their *kababayan*, they first need to have a strong conviction that cultural identity is valuable to God. Filipino Christians need to realize that culture is not a hurdle to Christian faith and living, but a great channel to discovering their transformed lives in Christ and expressing those lives in that same cultural framework rightly. Still, they need to rediscover this framework in the light of the Scriptures, or else cultural identity will be reaffirmed without scriptural accountability. Thus, one should reasonably start with contextual theologizing to expect profound and responsible transformation. Other forms of actions such as seminars, counseling, group study or cultural gatherings will then be grounded in a theology based on scriptural principles.

The participants in this study were aware of this problem, but they needed guidance and motivation to approach it efficiently. In their participation as a hermeneutical community, many of their questions were answered. The study helped them base their diaspora identity in Scriptures and in God’s larger mission plan. Eventually, if they apply the principles that they have learned from this study, those lessons will affect the way they worship, the way they read the Scriptures, and the way

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<sup>8</sup> Linda Revilla asserts that cultural identity is important for an individual who is in diaspora because it helps “...enhance their self-concept and self-esteem, and enables individuals to have a sense of belonging to an ethnic group” (Revilla 1997:96).

they will engage in mission. Through this realization, their mission as a local church will be more relevant to their *kababayan* and the gospel that they will live and proclaim will be a powerful witness to other diaspora groups—that one need not disregard one’s cultural identity when converted to Christianity; rather, one can meaningfully express Christianity through one’s cultural identity.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is the identity crisis Filipinos experience in diasporic life. Filipinos’ identity crisis is rooted in the years of colonization they have suffered which is significantly intensified by the struggle they face between the need to assimilate to the culture of their new home and the longing to preserve their own cultural identity. Filipino congregations are not able to respond to this challenge missionally possibly because most of them have not yet confronted this issue on their own in scriptural, spiritual or practical terms. Many Filipino Christians who are in diaspora have not yet discovered that their identity issues are valuable to God, being evident in many scriptural passages. Until this need is recognized, Filipino congregations will not be able to reach out effectively to their *kababayan* with insights that are relevant to Filipino immigrants’ identity concerns.

It is imperative that in order for the Filipino church’s action to be communally and scripturally accountable, it must start with theological reflections that are mindful of the context of the crisis in question. Contextual theologizing is a good starting point if it is to be expected that the action of the church will be insightful and responsible. Thus, the main goal of this research was to construct a Filipino American diasporic identity theology. The characteristics and purpose of this contextual theology is described in the

following questions. What is the nature of Filipinos' identity crisis? How is contextual theology helpful in solving Filipinos' identity crisis? What would a Filipino diasporic identity theology look like? What is the most effective hermeneutic to use in making a Filipino diasporic identity theology that is both reflective of the cultural context and accountable to scriptural principles?

### Assumptions

The following lists are assumptions that I have drafted during the initial phase of the research proposal. This list of assumptions was helpful in amalgamating the various segments of the research and the various gathered information from the research process.

1. The first assumption is that the culture of Filipinos in diaspora although similar in many respects with that of their homeland, has distinctive characteristics because it has undergone the process of diasporization.
2. The second assumption is that, embedded in Filipino's diasporic experience and cultural make up are postcolonial issues of missiological importance.
3. The third assumption is that, as the participants function as a hermeneutical community, they will be capable of producing a contextual theology.
4. The fourth assumption is that the historical, theological, and anthropological investigation that I conducted further revealed the need for the Filipino church in diaspora to envision and work for a contextualized diaspora theology.
5. The fifth assumption is that the cultural issue of identity in the context of diaspora will continue to have an essential bearing in the field of missiology and on the themes and methods of constructing contextual theology.

### Subproblems

The following are detailed descriptions of the research problem reflecting various fields of study and various issues to which the study responded:

1. What are the key elements in Filipinos' diasporic experience and culture that are essential in developing a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology?
2. How is Filipino immigrants' cultural identity different from the homeland Filipinos'?
3. How will the diasporic biblical stories shed insights into the formation of a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology?
4. What are the missiological implications of a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology to the Filipino church in diaspora, the Filipinos in diaspora in general, and the larger mission terrain the church is presently facing?

### Limitations of the Study

Presented in this section are the parameters that have defined my research, thus also briefly describing the issues that I did not discuss. Even if some issues bear significant research value, they are not directly connected to my stated research problem; thus, I delimited this study in the following ways:

1. Though diaspora study covers several missiological concerns, the main framework of this research project is contextual theology. Specifically, it engaged in the process of developing a contextual theology of Filipino American diasporic identity. Thus, other missiological concerns on diaspora such as global evangelism, transnational networking, and interreligious dialogue, were not subjects of discussion in this research.

2. Although the eventual goal of this research includes the observation of the application of what the participants learned into practical ministry and mission programs, this research did not covered that period. In other words, I have not done any follow-up study with the participants after the formation of the contextual theology.
3. The discussion on postcolonialism was limited to theories that were in direct relation with diaspora concerns. Postcolonialism was only employed to sharpen and enlighten the arguments that were raised in the discussion of diasporic issues. Postcolonialism was not discussed as a separate study. In other words, postcolonial study was treated as the larger framework in which diaspora study resides.
4. Although there were important missiological elements in the diaspora phenomenon that demand theologizing, my locus of contextualization was limited to diasporic cultural identity.
5. The focus group participants were limited to two Bible study groups—one from a Filipino congregation, and the other from a multiethnic church, which were both small groups of United Methodist local churches.
6. The field research methodology used was limited to focus groups, participant observation, and interviews. Library research was limited to historical, theological and demographical research.
7. The information that was taken from the Bible study sessions was limited to information on cultural identity. An observation protocol delineated essential from non-essential data. (See Appendix B).



### Significance of the Study

Migration, in the early phase of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has caused a revolutionary reshaping of the cultural and political structure of societies on a global scale so much so that the very concept of “nation-state” is now disputed due to the rapidly emerging migrant populations and cultural hybridism that occurs across borders. As a result, a growing interest in diaspora study has developed in academia since the late 1980s. Brubaker notes, “Diaspora and its cognates appear as keywords only once or twice a year in dissertations from the 1970s, about 13 times a year in the late 1980s, and nearly 130 times in 2001 alone” (Brubaker 2005:1). He further stresses that the “diaspora explosion” is not just confined in the academic field. “Diaspora yields a million Google hits; a sampling suggests that a large majority are not academic” (2005:1). At any rate, diaspora as an academic study, as a social consciousness, and as a cultural phenomenon will continue to be a paramount concern in missiology. The findings of this study will consequently be a contribution to this emerging missiological theme.

### The Significance of Diaspora in Religion

In past decades the concept of diaspora has been broadened from the dispersion experience of Jewish communities to various areas of reference. Some scholars, however, argue the existence of a newly emerging refocusing of diaspora back to a religious context. Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tololyan and Carolin Alfonso emphasize that:

A renewed focus on both sides of diasporic practice—the mobile as well as the rooted—will bring the meaning of religion back to the fore, discussing the meaning of religion both as a factor in forming diasporic social organization, as well as in shaping and maintaining diasporic identities. (2004:7)

The papers presented in this book emphasize the essence of “religious belief, symbolic references and organizational structures in the formation of diasporic identities” (2004:6). This theory can also be seen in another way: Diaspora experience affected immigrant religious groups to adapt in forms that are slightly distinct with the religion they practiced back home. In the same way, Filipino diasporic identity can be seen in two ways: that religion played a key role in the formation of Filipino Americans’ cultural identity and their diaspora experiences have caused their religious communities to adapt qualities that are distinct from their homeland. Both of these dynamics are significantly embedded in this study.

#### The Significance of Contextual Theology in Mission and Diaspora Study

This research project reveals a need for Filipino diaspora churches to do theological reflections concerning Filipinos’ diaspora identity. A contextually-theologized diasporic identity will help them face the identity crisis they are presently experiencing and will help them reach out to their *kababayan* more effectively.

The concept of contextualization has evolved in various forms. Gailyn Van Rheen notes, “Definitions of contextualization differ depending on the emphasis placed upon Scriptures and the cultural setting” (2006:2). Nonetheless, I will use Enoch Wan’s definition due to how it closely relates to the nature and goal of my study. In one of his articles about Sino-theology he comments contextualization as:

the efforts of formulating, presenting and practicing the Christian faith in such a way that is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency” (1999:1). The way this definition emphasizes the significance of the context and scriptural accountability ties in strongly to my research topic.

Norman Thomas traces the history of the concept of contextualization in a Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches publication, entitled *Ministry in Context*. He reports:

It was a response to the growing ecumenical frustration with the term indigenization. Structured by mission theorists such as Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson in the nineteenth century, the “indigenous church” had been conceived to affirm the dignity of local churches as the people of God who could be self supporting, self governing, and self-propagating. The call for a fourth self principle of self theologizing, plus a renewed emphasis on God’s continuing and dynamic mission (*Missio Dei*), were seedbeds for the new emphasis. (1995:175)

He further points out that the concept of contextual theology is more sensitive to contexts that are not bounded by cultural structures. He adds:

Whereas indigenization referred often to relating the Gospel to traditional cultures, contextualization was used in relation to cultures undergoing rapid social change. It implied taking into account the processes of secularity, technology, and the struggles for human justice being experienced by peoples of the Third world. (1995:175)

In support of this argument, Bevans remarks that contextual theology sees culture in “more dynamic, flexible ways and is seen to be not closed and self-contained, but more open and able to be enriched with an encounter with other cultures and movements” (1992:26-27). Contextualization, he adds “points to the fact that theology needs to interact and dialogue not only with traditional cultural values, but with social change, new ethnic identities, and the conflicts that are present as the contemporary phenomenon of globalization encounters the various peoples of the world” (Bevans 1992:27). Applying this point to my study, contextual theology caters the pluralistic trait of diaspora culture and experience. It provides theories and methods that are responsive to cultural context that are not restricted by national boundaries such as the diaspora context. Thus, if the mission of the Filipino immigrant church is to be successful, it needs

the framework of contextual theology as a tool for a responsive theological reflection of the diaspora context.

As explained earlier, diaspora carries a valuable mission opportunity for immigrant churches. Many religious groups believe that diaspora is a strategic position to engage in cross-cultural mission, especially to the unreached. Some of the proponents of this belief are Filipino mission agencies and churches. Luis Pantoja argues, “A better understanding of the dispersion of millions of Filipinos in over 180 countries all over the world may in actuality provide us with insightful ways as we participate in the fulfillment of the Great Commission” (Pantoja 2004b: xiii). FIN (Filipino International Network) and other Filipino transnational groups are looking at their diaspora location not just as an economic stepladder but also as a site for reaching out to their *kababayan* and other residents of the country they are in. This is the case in many Filipino churches in the United States. As explained earlier, Filipino congregations will be better equipped to respond to this mission challenge if they themselves deal with the cultural identity issues first. In order for them to have an effective and scripturally responsible action, they should start with theological reflections that are insightful of the identity crisis many Filipinos are facing. A contextual diaspora theology will not only strengthen them inwardly as a church, but will further make them “well-defined” and in essence, effective witnesses in a pluralistic and postmodern society.

One main proponent of contextual theologizing in diaspora contexts is Fernando Segovia. Emphasizing the value of diaspora theology and the development of social location as a medium of interpretation in his own life, he testifies:

It is this diaspora in which I find myself “thrown” (*arrojado*) as a human being, as a critic, and as a theologian; it is this diaspora, therefore that

serves not only as a fundamental constitutive factor for my social location but also as a point of departure for my critical and theological voice. (1995:61)

In a more focused context, Fumitaka Matsuoka, stressing the importance of Eleazar Fernandez's way of contextually theologizing the Filipino diaspora, says, "Fernandez identifies and develops theologically several motifs that best capture the Filipino American, such as multiple identities, plight, dreams, and vision—all different angles of reading the sociobiology of Filipino Americans in a globalized context" (Matsuoka 2003:4).

### The Significance of Cultural Identity

Lewellen remarks that "identity was not a focused concern of earlier anthropology" (2002:34). This attitude is attributed to the traditional structures, national boundaries and closed cultural terrains of most societies of the world community. However, "those days are long past. Boundaries were never as solid as once believed, and globalization has weakened or dissolved many boundaries that did exist" (2002:35). He adds that "identity did not really come to the fore until the anthropological self-questioning of the late 1970's and 1980's, when postmodernism shifted attention away from supposedly objective structures and facts to the subjective experience of the people being studied" (2002:92). Because of this continuous fluctuation of world structures, Lewellen notes that "Identity has been one of the most problematic and contentious fields within recent anthropology" (2002:90).

Missiology in the same note has also given valuable attention to the issue of identity and its relation to mission practice and mission theology. One of the emerging expressions of this concern is what David J. Bosch calls "mission as contextualization."

Bosch emphasizes that mission as contextualization is an important factor in mission practice and study. He asserts that it was “only fairly recently that this essentially contextual nature of the faith has been recognized” (1991:421). The emergence of mission as contextualization clarifies more clearly the nature of a people’s cultural identity in a given context especially in contexts where the identity is not confined by national boundaries—for example, a diaspora community. Furthermore, contextualization is helping missionaries to give more respect to the cultural identity of the recipients of mission, while at the same time “maintaining their identity in Christ” (Bosch 1991:427).

The study of cultural identity is an important component in understanding the church’s current mission to a world that is rapidly changing and to a generation whose identity questions are of central importance. Specifically, such emphasis in missiology provides valuable insights for those whose mission is focused on immigrant communities.

#### The Significance of the Filipino Presence in the United States

Three main factors make the Filipino diaspora a unique and significant case. These factors point to the importance of the study being done on Filipino diaspora in the framework of missiology.

First, the Filipinos’ population in the United States is an essential sociological case in the study of immigration and cultural exchange. According to the census done in 2000, “Filipinos were the second most numerous Asian subgroups, with a population of 1.8 million” (Azada 2002:127). Furthermore, “Filipinos also claim the longest history of Asian immigrants in this country” (2002:127). Basing the census from the homeland, approximately “seven million people, or 10 percent of the country’s total population,

work outside the Philippines, with an estimated two million residing in the United States” (2002:134). Filipinos’ presence in the United States demonstrates how important Filipino diaspora is, in political, academic and missiological study.

This research also recognizes the constant flux of Filipino Americans’ cultural characteristics. Some elements of the theological reflections of this research project, which are based on current Filipino migration, may be slightly inapplicable to the later generation of Filipino diaspora communities. Some of the conclusions and recommendations in this project may only be applied with the current Filipino migration. I therefore recommend that in order for the research findings of this project to be updated, other research projects of the same theme should also be done in periods where the Filipino immigrant cultural makeup is seemingly changing. This follow-up will reinforce the value of continuous contextualization and will capture the change element in Filipino diaspora culture.

The second factor is ironic given the information stated above. Despite its sizeable population in the United States, the Filipino diasporic community seemingly exhibits in some aspect, a weak political voice, a disunited community, and an indistinguishable cultural presence. In an interview I conducted with the president of the the Filipino Political Organization in New Jersey, I asked Joey Lagdameo if he thinks that Filipinos are given sufficient opportunity in the political field. He responded,

*Sa tingin ko nabibigyan naman ng opportunity ang mga Filipinos* [I think Filipinos are given opportunities]. But politicians have a very bad experience with Filipinos. Filipinos are not united. Nobody believes us. That is why we experienced discrimination. We are not getting the proper respect and services as a community because we are not united. We cannot get respect unless we act together. If we don’t do this, nobody will do this for us. I feel very sad. Nobody seems to care. (Lagdameo, Interview, 2006)

In spite of this disappointment, Joey Lagdamaeo strives to create avenues for Filipinos to have a strong political voice. Their organization creates programs and projects that promote unity among the Filipinos in their area.

Jocelyn Eclarin Azada comments that,

The disunity observed in the United States, sadly, has generally been attributed to experiences Filipinos bring with them from back home. A colonial history along with regionalistic and linguistic diversity in a country of over a thousand islands and two hundred dialectics has historically made unity difficult to achieve for the Filipino people. (2002:137)

She further asserts that “group cohesiveness has not been reinforced by traditional stabilizing agents such as churches or community organizations” (2002:137). Thus, a fragile Filipino community in the midst of an influential and powerful environment produces a Filipino diaspora community with a deep identity crisis. This reality confirms that the Filipino case is indeed a crucial issue in mission and is currently in need of a responsible and compassionate response.

Lastly, “The Pilipinos, among the three Asian groups [Chinese, Japanese and Pilipinos], were the only ones that had a long colonial experience—four centuries under Spain and half a century under the United States” (Pido 1997:21). This fact, in itself, explains thoroughly why Filipinos are in this widespread diaspora and why their condition is different from other Asian immigrants. Also, this reality validates why Filipino diaspora in postcolonial posture needs studying.

#### The Significance of the Study to Filipino United Methodists

I chose to examine United Methodist Filipino communities in the United States because I am currently functioning in a United Methodist context and expect to continue



my ministry there. Furthermore, Filipino United Methodism in diaspora reflects a unique and long history of “identity predicaments” from its birth in the Philippines to its flight back to the land of the Methodist missionaries who first brought the gospel to the islands. For example, throughout the history of Philippine Methodism, from the first major schism of the IEMELIF (*Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en Las Islas Filipinas*) to the current debate on globalization versus autonomy, the church has experienced various movements for nationalism and independence.<sup>9</sup>

This study will be a valuable document for all Filipino Methodists who are concerned with diaspora as a position from where to engage in theological reflections.

#### The Significance of the Study to the American Church

The impact of this research is not limited to the Filipino church. This study also discusses the dynamics involve between the Filipino immigrant church and the host church. Out of this discussion should emerge important points that will affirm the role of the American church as a host community in responding to the need of the immigrants. It is along this line of thought that Teroso Casino recommends that, “Local churches in host countries need to have a strong biblical theology of mission so that they could formulate mission policies and design mission activities relevant to the needs of the migrants or ‘dispersed nations’” (Casino 2004:132). This attitude is not only beneficial to the immigrants, but because it is self-transforming, it will also help the host church to be effective “missionaries” in their own land. In some cases however, this mindset is already exhibited when Filipinos preferred joining an Anglo church instead of being part of a Filipino immigrant church.

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<sup>9</sup> Jose Gamboa has presented a concise account of these movements in the book, *Methodism in the Philippines: A Century of Faith and Vision*. Manila: Philippine Central Conference, 2003.

In this chapter, I described foundational reasons why diaspora is a significant concern in mission. I also explained the rationale behind the goal of this study. In some parts of this chapter, I also briefly explained the research methodology I used in approaching the problem. In the next chapter, I explained in full details the various mechanics of the methodology. I have also described sections of the methodology that were not realized. Some of the issues that are generally described in this chapter will be better clarified as the readers go through from chapter to chapter.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

As explained earlier, this research project examines diasporic identity as a social phenomenon and consciousness, centering on the diaspora experience of Filipino American United Methodist Church members with specific reference to two Filipino UMC Communities in Gateway North District, New Jersey. Through the research process used, and by the participants functioning as a hermeneutical community, I have gathered information that is essential in developing a contextual theology reflective of and receptive to the concerns of postcolonial Filipinos in diaspora. The study is mainly an ethnographic investigation but has also engaged in an integrated process of theological and historical analysis as well as the whole process of contextual hermeneutics—all in the milieu of missiology.

It is apparent that some components of the three main divisions of the Methodology section—Data Needed, Instrumentation/Data Collection, and Data Analysis—overlapped each other. This reflects one of the principles that are embedded in Robert Schreiter's and William Dyrness' models (the two models I have drawn from for this study)—that contextual theologizing is not restricted by sets of finalities or segmented borders.<sup>10</sup> Generally, however, the methodology is presented systematically. Also, after the presentation of the three main sections, I turn to issues of research ethics and validity.

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<sup>10</sup> Kathleen and Billie DeWalt describing this research principle comments, "Drawing conclusions and attempting to verify them [data] takes place at every stage of the research process. It begins when research begins. Early in the research process the researcher begins to have ideas (hunches) about how things fit together, what is important, what things mean. In participant observation, by its nature iterative, hunches hypotheses for verification and even further investigation while the researcher is still in the field" (DeWalt 2002:189).

Before going to the three main points, let me present a general perspective of the study by outlining a theoretical framework. An explanation of the theoretical framework gives readers a clearer understanding of the interrelatedness of each theory involved in the research problem.

### Theoretical Framework

This section gives two portrayals of theoretical framework. The first one is in Figure 2, and the second one is in Figure 3. The first portrayal of theoretical framework consists of two main sections. The first part is *The Problem*, which is already explained on pages 6-7. Its appearance in this figure implies continuance from identifying the problem to the second part of this portrayal called *The Study*. *The Study* covers the whole research theme, goal, procedure and actual outcome. This section reflects how the study demonstrates to be an important response to the problem mentioned. The methodology of the study is divided into two main categories. The first one is called *library research* and the second one is called *field research*. Library research covers the goal of acquiring the needed information from books and articles about demography, history, diaspora studies, postcolonial studies, diaspora theology, and Scriptures. Field research, on the other hand, covers the process of obtaining the needed information from the participants through participant observation, focus group and interview. These methods are done in the context of the three-level contextualization model that I have adapted from Robert Schreiter and William Dyrness. The icon, *Contextual Theology of Filipino American Diasporic Identity* reflects the contextual theology formed in this study.

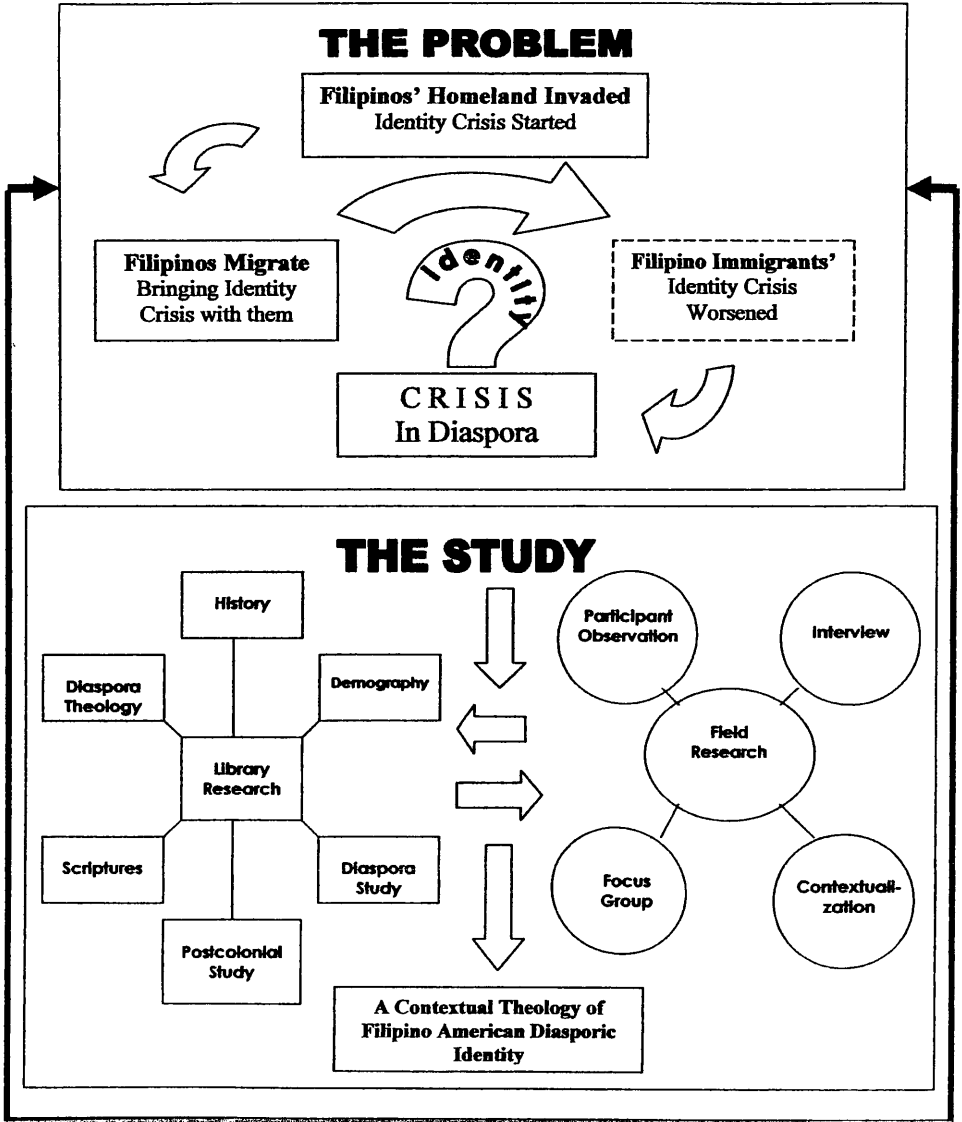
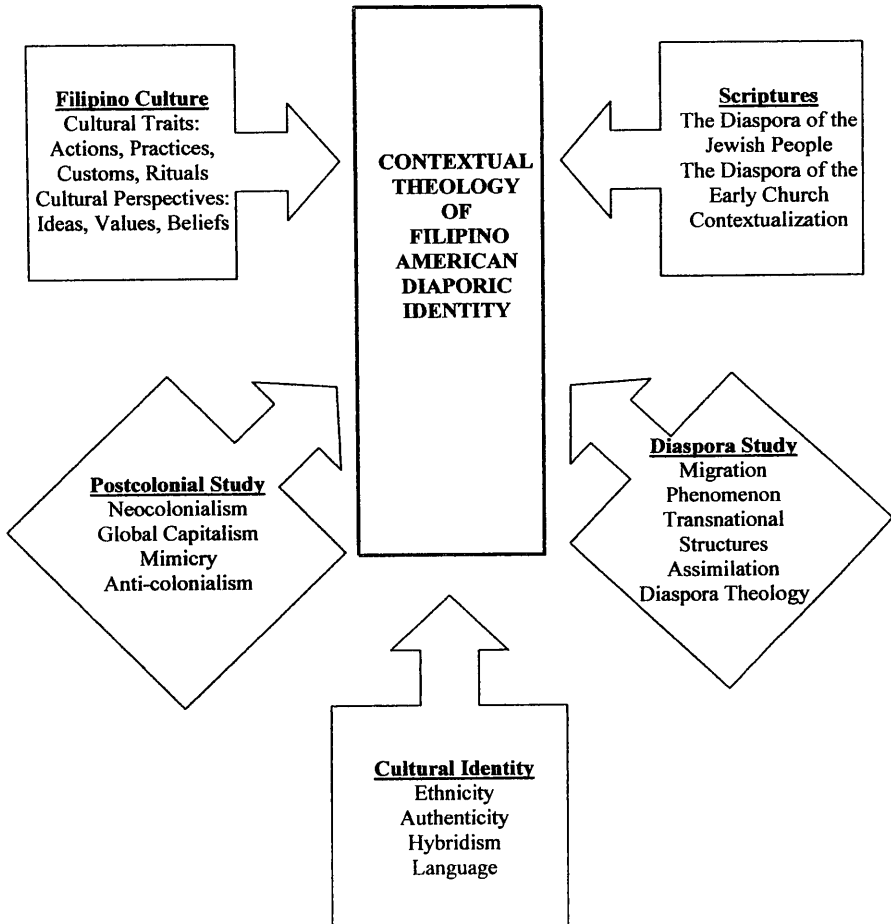


Figure 2: The first portrayal of theoretical framework.

The second portrayal of theoretical framework identifies the specific contributions of the resource areas. Under each resource areas are specific issues and theories discussed in this study. They are: Filipino Culture—cultural traits and cultural perspectives; Postcolonial Study—neocolonialism, global capitalism, mimicry, anti-colonialism; Cultural Identity—ethnicity, authenticity, hybridism, language; Diaspora Study—migration phenomenon, transnational structures, assimilation, diaspora theology; and Scriptures—the diaspora of the Jewish people, the diaspora of the early church, and contextualization theory. The model demonstrates how each one of these resource areas jointly contributes to make a comprehensive contextual theology for the Filipino diaspora. The various areas are connected by the overarching goal of producing a contextual theology of postcolonial Filipino American diasporic identity. It also shows the theories' correlation by the description of the specific topics needed from each resource area. Each of these topics also defines the limitations of the participation of each resource area. Each area points to the center, signifying that its importance lies in the fact that it contributes to the goal of the research. This framework is diagramed in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: The second portrayal of theoretical framework**

### Data Needed

This section identifies and explains the information gathered. Aside from the data that was obtained through the contextualization process, I have also consulted historical, demographic and theological sources that were important in illuminating the research. These sources give further clarification to the principal information from the contextualization process.

### History

The analysis of the data from the hermeneutical process must have some basic grounding upon historical facts. Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne E. Omford explain the two main historical sources: primary and secondary. “Primary sources are those that appeared first in time. They take such diverse forms as letters, diaries, sermons, census reports, immigration records, laws, photographs” (2000:173). The secondary sources on the other hand refer to sources that are the “work of the historians who have interpreted and written about primary sources” (2000:173). In this study, I focused my research more on the secondary sources and less on the primary ones.

The historical grounding of this study helped to establish the validity of claims in the analysis of data. How Filipino migration started here in the United States and how it contributed to the current condition of Filipino immigrants in the larger setting of my research population is an important area of study. The historical investigation includes materials that deal with the development of Filipino religious consciousness that came with the immigrants when they moved to the United States.



### Demography

To understand the social context of the information that came from the research participants, I studied the demographic background of the research setting; thus, I obtained information about the research population such as the geographical distribution, racial diversity, and socioeconomic conditions of the place where the research participants reside. This section describes the demographical status and covers the larger setting, which is the state of New Jersey and the micro setting, which includes Union County, Union Township, and Jersey City.

### Theological Data

This study has investigated theologies and hermeneutical methods of previous works in diaspora theology. The findings have provided ideas as to how other diaspora communities formulated their contextual theology. It gave me insights in guiding the participants as to the approach, direction, system and expectations of the hermeneutical process. Insights formulated through previous diaspora theology projects were consulted so as to provide additional guidance, particularly with the interpretation of data.

The participants also investigated biblical passages that carry a diaspora theme. One vital reading posture in approaching biblical texts is a hermeneutical awareness of identifying God's larger purpose that encompasses the experiences of diaspora communities in the Scriptures. The texts in the "Scriptural Study Guide" (see Appendix C) are examples that reflect this theory: The Diaspora People and their Economic Flight (Gen. 47:1-12; 13-26; Exod. 1:1-22); The Diaspora People and their Cultural Identity (Dan. 1:1-21); The Diaspora People and the Gospel (Acts 2; 8:1-4; 11:19); and The Diaspora People and their Homeland (Neh. 1:1-11). These passages have functioned as a

springboard in helping the participants to immerse in the larger diaspora contexts of the Scriptures.

### Data from Contextualization

The information that was treated as main data was produced during focus groups, interviews, and participant observation. The focus group sessions are divided into three levels—the Observation Level, the Interpretation Level and the Impact Level.<sup>11</sup> In the first level, four types of information were gathered. This information is divided into two categories: data from *observation of culture* and data from *observation of Scriptures*. Information from observation of culture includes cultural perspectives and cultural traits. Cultural perspective refers to the cognitive aspect of culture such as ideas, values or belief systems. Cultural trait refers to the observable or physical aspect of culture such as cultural actions such as actions, practices, customs, rituals and tradition. Information from observation of Scriptures consists of perspectives used as hermeneutical lenses, and scriptural or theological themes formed.<sup>12</sup> Aside from the four categories of information, I was also conscious of two overarching themes that have emerged from the four categories: postcolonial issues and issues on Philippine Methodism.

I also understand that the information on culture is diverse not just in the multiethnic group, but also in the Filipino group because of the Filipinos' regional dialects and other subcultural differences. In this study, the Filipino participants came

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<sup>11</sup> The complete process is explained in the Instrumentation and Data Collection section.

<sup>12</sup> For clarification, the terms *contextual theologizing* (or *contextualization model*) and *participant observation* and *interviews* are sometimes used interchangeably because they refer to the same thing—the field study. Contextualization refers to the hermeneutical model used while participant observation, interview and focus group refers to the research mechanics used to conduct the contextualization. The dynamics between these terms are further clarified in Figure 2.

from different regions. I have not dwelt much on these differences but have instead focused on cultural elements that are common to all of them.

At the second level, the Interpretation Level, two main types of information were gathered: emerging cultural themes and biblical texts that are significantly connected with the diasporic experience and cultural consciousness of the participants. In the third level, the Impact Level, four main types of information were obtained: (1) information that describes the impact of culture on diaspora theology, (2) information that describes the impact of theology on culture, (3) information that describes the impact of diaspora theology on reading the Scriptures, and (4) main themes of the contextualized theology that I began itemizing in Level 3.

As mentioned in previous sections, the people who participated as informants also functioned as a hermeneutical community. They not only responded to the questions, but they participated in interpreting them. They not only studied the particular social setting, but they engaged many times in self-evaluation because they were members of the community being studied. Their positions as “research subjects/interpreters” were not treated dualistically. They, as the research participants, were not treated as separated from the fact that they are also the local theologians. This study approach benefited from information that was more apparent, informed, and reliable due to the setting’s unique interrelatedness. The whole process is explained in the Instrumentation/Data Collection section. Instead of having one large group, I decided to work with two smaller groups. A common approach in ethnographic studies is to use fewer participants for the procedure in order to achieve a “thick description” of a limited case.

### Instrumentation/Data Collection

This section explains how the data was gathered. As explained earlier, the information was generally gathered by using the methods of participant observation, focus groups, and interviews. Library data, on the other hand, provided the information on the theoretical, theological, historical, and demographical context of the community studied. The last part of this section is Contextual Theologizing Level 1: Data Collection—Observation (see p. 53).<sup>13</sup>

#### Library Research

This area of research involves discovering and analyzing texts such as books, journals, periodicals, academic papers, sound recordings, and electronic media sources. Library data and field data mutually strengthen each others' arguments and claims to validity. For example, part of the study investigated the historical development of Filipino diaspora phenomenon in the United States. Such historical information provided illumination to the field data that I collected later on in my research.

#### The Hermeneutical Community

The main resource in this research was the hermeneutical community. Schreiter claims that the community is the main source for theology's development and expressions. He states that the role of the whole community of faith "is often one of raising questions, of providing the experience of having lived with those questions and struggled with different answers, and of recognizing which solutions are indeed genuine, authentic and commensurate with their experience" (1985:17). In short, the community is

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<sup>13</sup> For clarification, the terms *Observation Level* and *Data Collection* are used interchangeably because they basically refer to Level 1 of the Contextualization Model. This connection is further clarified in Figure 2 (see p. 41).

the main source for theology's development and expressions (1985:17). However, to define the whole theological process as a pure effort of the people is to be in the danger of falling either into syncretism or cultural romanticism. This is the part where I as the research theologian gave my contribution.

For Schreiter, the theologian(s) serve as an important resource in order to "help the community to clarify its own experience and to relate it to the experience of other communities past and present" (1985:18). Having more profound insights into scriptural information, the theologian(s) as an example, can guide the community to encounter narratives and ideational concepts that are valuable parallels with the people's experiences. The hermeneutical community, however, should also be sensitive whether the participating theologians are already dominating or manipulating the theological process. To avoid this danger, I have established guiding principles in interacting with the community. This guideline is explained more fully in the Validity of the Method section (see p. 59).

Thus, in this research project, theologizing has been shared with the participating community of faith, who are committed to scriptural accountability. This research principle implies that the participants in this study have also functioned as a community of theologians who have interpreted the gathered information together with me. The description of their responsibilities is further clarified in the succeeding sections.

Because the second group has a multiethnic composition, some of the inputs gathered came from non-Filipinos. Their contribution is needed and valid in this study for two reasons. First, because all of the non-Filipino participants are also immigrants, they share the same sentiments, experiences, and struggles with the Filipino participants.

Second, their presence and contribution is needed in the study so that the goal of investigating the Filipino immigrants within the context of a multiethnic community can be met efficiently.

### Participant Observation, Focus Groups, and Interviews

As explained previously, the overarching research methods that have anchored and guided my work were participant observation, focus groups and interviews. Kathleen and Billie DeWalt define participant observation as a method “in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002:1). My three years of pastoral appointment to the church of the second group of participants gave me the advantage of observing them at close range. I am also closely acquainted with the participants of the first group and have frequent encounters with them during Filipino gatherings and district or conference-wide meetings. Moreover, though the church of the participants of the first group is located in Jersey City, most of them reside in Union County where the church of the second group is located. Union County is well-known as a place where many Filipinos reside. Being immersed in this environment gave me the advantage of using participant observation efficiently.

I also conducted focus groups. David Stewart and Prem N. Shamdasini explain, “Focus groups provide data from a group of people more quickly and at less cost than would be the case if each individual were interviewed separately” (1990:16). Furthermore, “Focus groups allow the researcher to interact directly with respondents. This provides opportunities for the clarification of responses, for follow-up questions,

and for the probing of responses” (Stewart and Shamdasini 1990:16). Both of these points were proven accurate in the focus group sessions I conducted because I had rich interaction with the members of the group, and the members interacted well among themselves. In relation to the importance of group interaction, Stewart and Shamdasini add that focus groups “allow respondents to react to and build upon the responses of other group members” (1990:16).

The focus groups were held within the setting of Bible study meetings. They were done on two levels of meetings. In the first level, I observed two separate Bible study groups. The first group, which consists of 13 participants, is a Bible study group of First Filipino American United Methodist Church in Jersey City. The second group consists of 19 participants and is a study group of a multiethnic congregation called the United Methodist Church in Union County. The specific description of each participant is reflected in Appendix A. The description includes their age, regional birthplace, years in residence in the United States, migration status, and occupation.

The sampling procedure I used in choosing the participants is purposive and connected to the problem and goal of the study. For Level 1, the guidelines I used are the following.

1. Participants should be members of the church chosen.
2. Participants should already be regular attendees of the Bible study group.
3. Participants have experienced firsthand migration.
4. Participants should be residing in the United States at least one year.
5. Participants should be willing to go to the second level if offered by the researcher.
6. Participants should be willing to participate in the study and have signed the

*Informed Consent Form.*

In the second level of the focus group session, I limited the number of participants to 15. This session is a joint study of the two participating groups. Again the sampling procedure was purposive or theoretical. I used the following guidelines.

1. Participants should all be Filipinos.
2. Participants have exhibited a more in-depth and experiential knowledge of Filipino culture during the first-level sessions.
3. Participants have exhibited a more advanced knowledge of Scriptures as compared to other members of the Bible study group during the first level sessions.

The complete explanation of the sampling procedure is in Appendix D entitled, *Sampling Procedure for Choosing Participants*.

At the observation level, I also engaged in comparative study. The comparative analysis has helped me to identify preliminary information that suggests diasporic contextualizing trends. Some elements and conditions that are common are evident to these two groups—both groups are United Methodist members and both are a community of immigrants. The point of contrast is that, the first group is a part of an all-Filipino congregation, while the second is part of a multiethnic church. As explained earlier, the guiding line of inquiry throughout this research is the cultural problem of identity. By comparing these two groups, significant theoretical distinctions that are relevant to the topic, such as pressure for assimilation and the desire for preservation of identity, emerged.

At this level, I have identified important cultural traits and perspectives that were later used as cultural themes. During these sessions, I provided guide questions that



stimulated discussions on subjects that pertain to the theme diasporic identity. Appendix C shows the Bible study questions I have used. As explained earlier, I identified cultural perspectives that were used by the participants in the way they observe, interpret, and apply their scriptural lessons. I wanted to discover elements of their culture that reflect their diasporic life. I also was aware that this diaspora-formed culture is expressed not just in the cognitive and psycho-spiritual realm of theologizing but also in the physical facets—cases such as preferred seating arrangements, posted announcements, food, and musical preference, etc. Examples of inquiries in this area included the following: How does spatial arrangement affect communication—verbally or nonverbally? What role does food play in prompting social interaction? The running record of my observation covered the full duration of the Bible study session and the short meal fellowship that followed after that.

The second and third levels of group meetings were more focused on analysis: Level 2 was the Interpretation level; Level 3 was the Impact level. Out of the two groups in the first level, I chose 15 participants who took part in a smaller group in Level 2. Contrary to my initial plan, that the research participants would join me in Level 3, due to the difficulty of setting a common schedule where most of them were available, this plan had to be abandoned. After several attempts, I resorted to sending them a follow-up questionnaire, which was also designed to obtain information needed for Level 3. This change is further explained in the following chapters.

In Appendix D, I have outlined the criteria I used for choosing the participants. I also provide interpretive questions that stimulated discussion on subjects that are in line with

the general theme of this research (see Appendix E). This group interpreted with me the information that I gathered in Level 1, the Observation Level.

Prior to these meetings, I also established an observation protocol that delineated the essential information from those that are irrelevant to the goal of the research. This protocol prevented the research from having an overload of information and disjointed analysis. In both levels of group meetings, I used video and audio recorders as well as on-site field notes. Notes were transcribed in prepared codes for initial categorization; thus, data collection easily moved from documentation to categorization.

Some of the participants also were interviewed. Individual interviews carry the advantage of probing deeper into issues that emerged in observation. In addition to individual interviews, I also conducted one group interview with a family. I used this method as supplementary means of acquiring pertinent information in conjunction with the individual interview approach. I conducted the group interview because I saw the need of acquiring information from within an actual family setting, which helped me identify insights that were not discernible in individual interviews alone.

After explaining the nature and topic of my study, I provided a written consent form that the participants signed indicating their approval of the research process. In Appendix F, I provided a draft of the interview questions that I used both during the individual and group interviews.

### Contextual Theologizing Level 1: Data Collection—Observation

As explained earlier, this level is focused on observation and thus the only level that falls under the Data Collection category. The second and third levels of contextual theologizing falls under Data Analysis and are discussed in Chapter 4.

I have adapted the methodology found in both Robert Schreiter's and William Dyrness' models of contextualization. The methodology is a well-established resource in the field of contextual theology. It was Robert Schreiter who first formulated this model and William Dyrness later adapted and modified it (Schreiter 1985:25; Dyrness 1990:30). Many of its components are the same but it is treated as two separate sources. The main component which is not mentioned in Robert Schreiter's model yet was given significant place in Dyrness' model, is the primary role of the Scriptures. Coming from a Roman Catholic background, Schreiter used the term "church tradition" instead of using Scriptures (Schreiter 1985:25). Dyrness, on the other hand, accentuated the significance of Scriptures, saying, "Only Scriptures, not some particular interpretive schema is transcultural. For the authority of the Scripture reflects God's own transcendent authority over all cultures" (1990:31). On the other hand, Robert Schreiter does point to another factor that also plays a vital role in contextualization—the Christian community. He argues that local theology "needs to be tested against the experience of other Christian communities, both present and past" (1990:34). This principle, however, should not undermine the Scriptures as the main basis for theologizing. Most of the principles I draw upon are directly from Robert Schreiter's work because, unlike William Dyrness, he gives a complete description of the contextualization process. In this study, many times I

address their models as a single model because most of the components I adapted are both found in Schreiter's original work and Dyrness' adaptation.

I also modified some parts of the model to suit the goal of my research better. The contextualization models they designed both depict cycles of theologizing that are not obstructed by sets of finalities or modes of stagnancy. Also, both authors recognize the significance of local themes and biblical texts as having mutual influence with each other. Although these two models are central to the research, other principles from various contextual theology scholars were also employed. This contextualization process is diagramed in the Contextualization Model in Figure 4. As shown in Figure 4, the Contextualization Model integrates the Research Process (Data Collection and Data Analysis) and Research Mechanics (Participant Observation, Focus Groups and Interview). This diagram reflects the interconnectedness of the research methods used.

Figure 4: The contextualization model.  
(This model is adapted from William Dyrness and Robert Schreier)

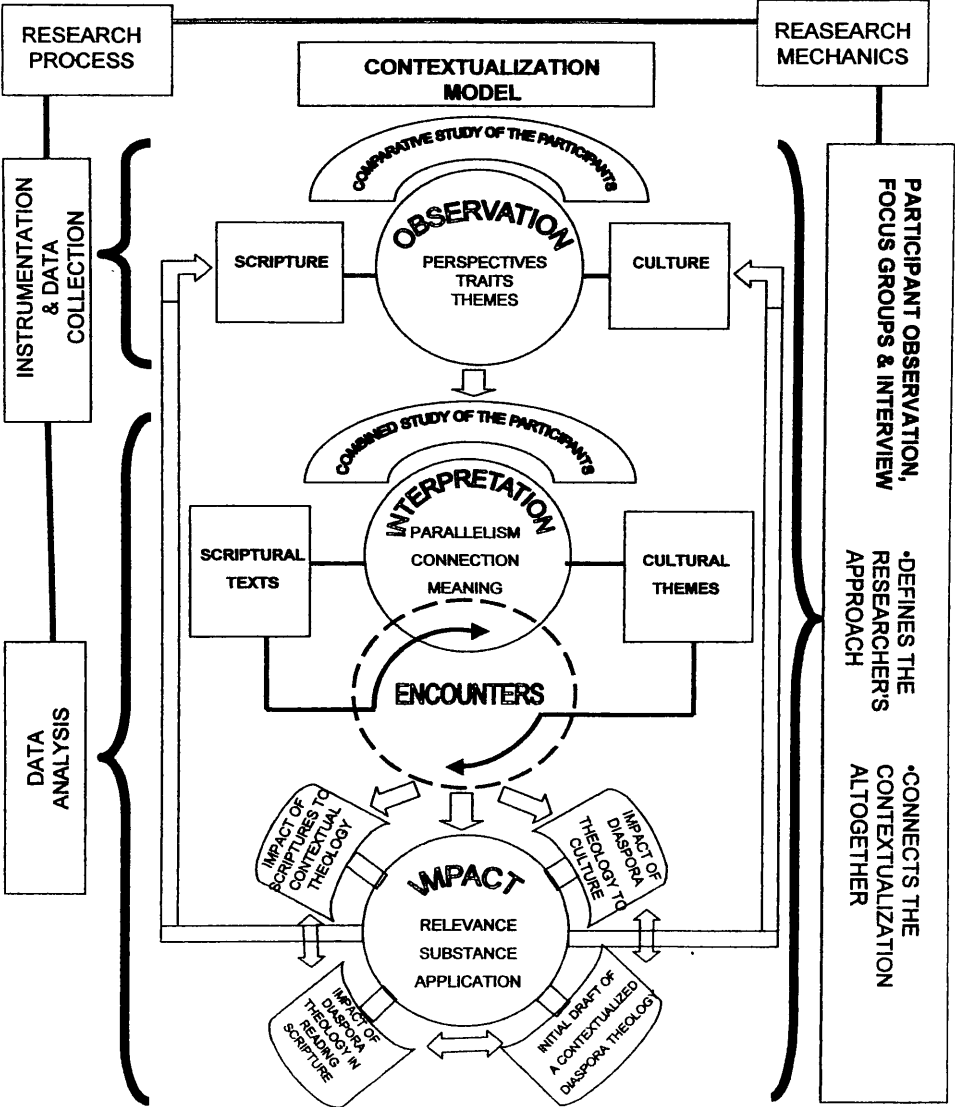


Figure 4 shows the Contextualization Model. Level 1: Observation includes information of two main things: culture and Scriptures.

Schreiter points out that listening to a culture is important in order to “discover its principal values, needs, interests, directions, and symbols” (1985:28). Thus, under the culture category, I have observed two main cultural aspects—cultural perspective and cultural trait. Cultural perspective refers to the cognitive aspect of culture such as ideas, values, or belief systems. Cultural trait refers to the observable or physical aspects of culture like cultural actions, practices, customs, rituals and traditions.

The second locus of observation is Scriptures. As explained earlier, Level 1 is a level where two Bible study groups studied four selected topics as I simultaneously worked with them and observed them. During the study sessions, I focused on observing two things—perspectives used as hermeneutical lenses, and scriptural or theological themes formed.

### Data Analysis

Data Analysis is the continuation of the contextualization process from Level 1 (as explained in the Data Collection section) to Levels 2 and 3, which falls under this section—Data Analysis.

#### Contextual Theologizing Level 2: Data Analysis—Interpretation

As I have explained earlier, Level 2 is where the participants functioned more extensively as my co-interpreters. From the observation of culture, certain central themes emerged. Schreiter remarks that such emergence of cultural themes is usually determined by two factors: “a current and often urgent need in a culture; the larger patterns that determine how things are done in a culture” (1985:30). In Appendix G, Guide Questions

for Analysis of Culture, I listed the guide questions I have used in observing and analyzing the findings. In this study, I have limited the search to cultural identity in the context of diaspora.

After determining the essential cultural concerns, I “respond[ed] to those themes of Scriptures that parallel the questions of the culture” (Dyrness 1990:29). In the context of diaspora, parallelisms are mostly found in the biblical exilic crises of the Israelites. Smith-Christopher argues, “Ancient Israelites’ responses to exile and diaspora, as reflected in the biblical texts, can provide the building blocks for rethinking the role of the Hebrew Bible in informing the modern Christians theological enterprise” (2002:6). In the preceding Data Needed section, I mentioned biblical precedents for the diasporic situation in specific texts of Scriptures that the hermeneutical community used to gain insights for their theological reflections. These passages are arranged as a brief Bible study guide as shown in Appendix C, Scriptural Study Guide. As expected, participants theologically and spiritually linked their diaspora experiences and culture with the biblical diaspora characters and stories. This experience is referred to in Figure 4 as *encounter*.

Another point of interpretation is the comparison of the data from the two groups. From the data that emerged from Level 1, I have chosen points of similarity and difference that are significant to the theme of my research.

### Contextual Theologizing Level 3: Data Analysis—Impact

Due to scheduling difficulties, the participants were not able to meet to accomplish Level 3. To obtain their input, I sent a summarized presentation of the

findings to the participants and asked their responses. The answers they shared are also reflected here.

At this point, the encounter between cultural themes and scriptural texts has produced data that was processed later on as a main component of diaspora theology. Furthermore, just as Schreiter and Dryness have suggested, I analyzed various directions of impact among culture, theology, and Scripture. Here are the breakdowns. In the first part of Level 3, I have articulated theories that emerged from the data analysis into defined sections or main points. These main points became the themes that reflected the Filipino diaspora theology that I, with the participants, constructed.

In the first section where I dealt with the various impacts of the study, I took note of occasions when the Scriptures guided the process of contextualization. This section is called *the impact of Scriptures to contextual theology*. I also discussed how the diaspora reading affected the way the participants approach Bible interpretation. This section is called, *the impact of contextual theology in reading the Scriptures*. Even after the study ended, I hoped that the participants would enhance their awareness to hearing diasporic voices embedded in biblical passages. Having a new theological lens, they are positioned to discover other passages in the Scriptures that have theological significance for their diasporic situations. They can also share notes with other diaspora communities, learn from others' discovery, and influence others with their own.

As much as the whole contextualization process respects the central role of culture in theological reflection, it also upholds a constructive criticism of cultural systems that advocate for practices or beliefs that are morally or scripturally problematic.



The study delved to some extent into exploring a *countercultural mode* where the contextual theology functioned as a prophetic message to the larger diaspora community.

This section is called *the impact of diaspora theology on culture*. Discussing the importance of the countercultural mode of contextualization, Bevans argues, “What this model realizes more than any other model is how some contexts are simply antithetical to the gospel and need to be challenged by the gospel’s liberating and healing power” (1992:118). I have, therefore, identified significant points as to how the constructed diaspora theology addresses the negative characteristics of the Filipino diaspora culture. As explained earlier, Schreiter’s and Dyrness’ method of contextualization describe a cyclical interconnection, continuity, and flexibility. Thus, some of the insights from the three levels of procedures were produced simultaneously, and sometimes a method was repeated especially when some of the subsequent outcome suggests that a repetition is needed.

### The Validity of the Method

The whole methodological process of this study was designed to reflect the validity of the research in terms of reliability, accuracy and significance. Two facets of validity are imperative—the internal and the external.

The internal validity “is the extent to which its [the research] design and the data that it yields allow the researcher to draw accurate conclusions about cause-and-effect and other relationships within the data” (Leedy and Omford 2000:103-04). To ensure that the conclusion drawn from the data is valid, the chosen instruments should have the ability to eliminate other possibilities of explanation for the results (2000:104). Thus, for example, the participants were unaware of the established theories of the research.

Another element of internal validity is *triangulation*, a process where, “...multiple sources of data are collected with the hope that they all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory” (2000:105).

As mentioned before, the second of the two research group participants are members of the church I am currently pastoring—The United Methodist Church in Union. I have been serving this church for three years. I chose this church because it exhibited great applicability to my study due to its characteristics, composition, and accessibility. In respect to issues of validity, I have established certain limitations for myself in terms of direct contribution during the study sessions. For example, I have not offered input unless asked, and it was usually about background information that lay people lacked, such as the historical context of a certain passage. At all times, I have also allowed the participants to generate and to discuss the various issues for themselves.

The external validity of research is “the extent to which its results apply to situations beyond the study itself—in other words, the extent to which the conclusions drawn can be generalized to other contexts” (Leedy and Omford 2000:105). The instrument in this study is designed in such a way that if it is used in a different Filipino diaspora community, it should demonstrate the same effectiveness. (This assumption was not tested in this study, so the possibility remains theoretical.) Another element of external validity is the representativeness of the sample. As much as possible, I have chosen participants who represent the larger Filipino community in their respective churches as a whole. (Criteria may be viewed in Appendix D). Furthermore, the content, mechanics, and usage of the instruments exhibited elements of consistency from one meeting to another and from one interview to another.

### Research Ethics

With respect to the right of the participants to be informed properly, an *informed consent form* was provided to the participants. The form contained the theme, duration, mechanics, and goal of the research project and the expected involvement of the participants. In case of inquiries, the form gave detailed information as to how participants can contact the researcher. A draft of the *informed consent form* is in Appendix H. The participants were also offered a comprehensive summary of the research findings upon completion. To assure further confidentiality, participants were given pseudonyms. In other words, I took measures to assure that all contribution have remained anonymous.

In this chapter I explained how the research was conducted. I described the theoretical framework, the needed data, the collection of data, and the analysis of data. This chapter on methodology is foundational to the value and clarity of the succeeding chapters—*The Data* and *The Data Analysis*. In the next chapter, I described how the research methods were used in acquiring the needed data. I also presented the information gathered from history, demography, and the collected data from the Observation Level where the focus group and interview sessions took place.

### CHAPTER 3: THE DATA

This chapter contains the bulk of the data that was taken mainly from participant observation, focus groups and interview sessions. Library research has also produced three main types of gathered information: literature on theory and method, history, and demography. Under this section, I created two separate subsections for history and demography. The information from reviewed literature is spread throughout this research project. Thus, Chapter 3 contains gathered information for three main divisions: Historical Background, Demography and Instrumentation/Data Collection—Observation Level.

#### Historical Background

This section is divided into four parts. The first part is an account of American colonialism in the Philippines and the early Protestant missionaries. The second part presents a general historical timeline of Filipino migration to the United States. This historical investigation provided insights as to how earlier periods of Filipino migration ushered in the present community condition of the research participants. The third part is a review of materials that deal with the historical development of Filipino religious groups in the United States as they mushroomed along with the Filipino immigrants. The last part is a brief presentation of the history of both of the churches where the members of the Bible study groups belong. This information has provided additional insights as to how the current characteristics of the groups came into being.

#### Colonialism and the Early Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines

The identity problem that Filipinos manifest in their diaspora life is also deeply rooted in their many years of being colonized. Colonization has created a diaspora people

whose history and cultural identity is compromised, twisted and sometimes forgotten. Azada comments that in diaspora life, “a lack of connection with their Philippine background and culture contributes to a weak sense of identity and a lack of self-esteem” (2002:137). Colonization also explains the current dominant position of the United States over previously subjugated nations such as the Philippines. Relating this fact with Filipino migration, Yen Lee Espiritu asserts,

The relationship between the Philippines and the United States has its origins in a history of conquest, occupation and exploitation. A study of Filipino migration to the United States must begin with its history. Without starting here, we risk reducing Filipino migration to just another immigrant stream. (2003:1)

Thus, in order to fully understand the identity of the Filipino diaspora people fully, one needs to understand their historical roots. Emphasizing this truth, Lewellen quotes from a Maya poster he saw in Guatemala: “Only when a people learns from its history and affirm its identity does it have the right to define its future” (2002:89).

Many Filipino scholars argue that most of the previous historical materials published about the colonialism in the Philippines have been adulterated by the aspiration to please its past colonizer. Recently however, postcolonial Filipino scholars have published historical materials that deconstruct the former historical accounts. Arguing along this line, Lily Mendoza points out,

The Philippines became a country without history. With the mandating of a closed circuit of interaction (*Pantayong Pananaw*), the goal is to begin again from the beginning, this time, rewriting history no longer for the consumption of outsiders, but for Filipinos themselves (*sarili*), and for their own *kaginhawahan* (benefit of well-being), consistent with the notion of *kasaysayan* (history) as primarily a *paguulat sa sarili* (a reporting to self) versus an accounting or justifying on oneself to another (*iba*). (2002:89-90)

Thus, most of the materials quoted here are written by scholars who used postcolonial lenses to decipher the previously concealed elements of Filipino history.

Spain's colonial control over the Philippines gradually shriveled as call for reforms from prominent Filipino scholars incited various armed revolutions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, "Spain was not only fighting a losing battle with the Filipinos but was also being destroyed by the powerful armed forces of the United States" (Gonzales 2001:252). Historical accounts vary as to whether the celebrated "Philippine independence" was indeed an aftermath of anticolonial uprising or was a self-made illusory evasion of the pressing inference that the Islands were treated as "political merchandise" between two colonial powers. Gonzales, for example, argues, "So as not to accept defeat from its non-European subjects, Spanish authorities ceded the Philippines to the Americans for \$20 million and continued trade access, under the treaty of Paris signed on 10 December 1898" (2001:253). Arguing along this line, San Juan asserts, that an independent Philippines is still undergoing an agony of birth until now because the previous pregnancy "has been aborted and suppressed by United States military power when it was being born during the revolution of 1896-1898, a culmination of three centuries of popular uprisings against Spanish tyranny" (1998:12).

After becoming an American colony, numerous battles broke out between the Filipinos and the American military units. It was also during this period of American hegemony that countless Protestant missionaries went to the Islands, spurred on by the noble cause of Christ's mission to bring the good news. During the Second World War, the Philippines were temporarily conquered by Japan. After the war, the precious flag of

freedom was recovered once more for the Philippines by American intervention and granting of political independence from three years of Japanese hegemony.

Even after the elimination of direct colonial control, the new stage of colonialism, which is neocolonialism, was being structured, eventually infiltrating the military, economic, administrative powers, and almost all forms of institutions. E. San Juan argues that during those critical years, “Electoral democracy, mass public education, civil service was Americanized” (1998:58). “Elected officials were given a great deal of symbolic public space but were denied real power which remained firmly anchored in U.S. hands” (1998:69). “Native languages, frequently oral rather than written, have been marginalized or dismissed in educational and other institutions along with the cultural values and tradition to which they testify” (McLeod 2000:124). For this reason Ania Loomba testifies to “imperialism as the highest stage of colonialism” (1998:6).

During the early years of American hegemony, Protestant missionaries also started to arrive. Although most of them possessed the genuine intention of bringing the gospel, Clymer asserts that there were missionaries “who shared the belief accepted by most Protestants since at least the civil war, that the survival and expansion of the United States was part of the divine plan” (1986:153). In fact, this ideology has played an important role in merging the colonial agenda with the mission program of the American church. Renowned Methodist Episcopal Bishop Matthew Simpson, quoting Philip D. Jordan, claimed, “God cannot afford to do without America” (1986:154).<sup>14</sup> A Presbyterian assembly announced after Commodore Dewey’s victory at Manila Bay, “God has given into our hands, that is, into the hands of American Christians, the

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<sup>14</sup> Bishop Matthew Simpson, quoting Philip D. Jordan, “Immigrants, Methodists, and a ‘Conservative Social Gospel, 1865-1908.

Philippines Islands” (1986:154).<sup>15</sup> Missionaries would later denounce the precolonial customs and the ghost of Roman Catholicism as barbaric, corrupt, and disorderly. Some colonially minded Methodist commentators as a result “wanted the United States to introduce ‘western civilization of the Anglo-Saxon type’ to the East” (1986:156).

Moreover, those who upheld the white man’s burden, “those missionaries who welcomed America’s assumption of sovereignty, particularly those who believed that it was part of providential design, could not logically object to the use of force, if necessary to confirm that sovereignty” (1986:156).

In general, many missionaries support the dream of Filipinos for independence. Clymer asserts, “[T]hose who can clearly differentiate between Protestantism and Americanism cannot be properly called imperial agents” (1986:173). Unfortunately, despite the genuineness in many missionaries, the military leaders found a way to use it as a colonial weapon of further enervating the revolutionaries’ defense. Thus, to many Filipinos, Protestantism unconsciously made itself an accessory to many of colonials’ desire to invade the Islanders.

The work of Protestant missionaries spread in many key provinces. At the forefront is the dissemination of the Bible and its translation to local dialects. Although the project was an occasion for Filipinos to understand the Bible more comprehensibly, the attitude of many translators led to oppressive inferences in Filipino dialects. Nonetheless, the translation projects were of major importance for the success of evangelism in many key regions.

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in “The Report of the Philippines Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1904,” (Manila: Methodist Publishing House, 1905), 5; Anderson, “Providence and Politics Behind Protestant Missionary Beginnings in the Philippines” 279-300.



As Protestantism advanced however, the supremacy of English was established into many academic institutions. Mariano Casuga Apilado reports, “English was used as the medium of instruction in schools. Some missionaries felt that the task of civilizing and Christianizing the Philippines would be facilitated with English as a common language” (1976:153). Some uphold, “The introduction and heavy emphasis on the use of the English language served to prevent Filipinos from developing their native tongue” (Apilado 1976:153). Rev. Leonardo Davidson, a Presbyterian missionary writes, “Please note as it is important in all of our future work here, THE COMING GENERATION WILL NOT BE ABLE TO READ ANY OF THE NATIVE DIALECTS” [original emphasis] (Apilado 1976:153).<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the Americanization of some Protestant churches in the Philippines became a vital means of establishing *colonial mentality* among many Filipinos. The cultural, the ethical, the sociological, and the psychological aspect, later adapted to what many Filipinos had become religiously—Westernized. If this adaptation is the case, it is also reasonable to think that the path towards the reclamation of Filipino identity should also start in the religious field. It is true however that such vision will not be attained without a struggle. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder asserts, “Those who have been ‘objects’ of the church’s mission sometime must struggle painfully to recover and reclaim identities that were wrongly taken from them in the name of the gospel” (2004:388).

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<sup>16</sup> Apilado quotes a communication from Leonard Davidson to Frank Ellinwood, Feb. 4, 1901. Presbyterian Archives. Upper case letters are used in the original.

### A Short History of Filipino Migration in the United States

Because of the American colonization that was taking place in the Philippines, doors were also opened for Filipinos to come to the United States. Explaining the significant presence of Filipinos in the United States, Espiritu stresses, “Filipinos went to the U.S. because Americans went there first” (2003:25).

However, even before American annexation of the Philippines, a small Filipino community had already settled in Louisiana. The first major wave of Filipino migration however began from 1904 to 1934, focusing in Hawaii and California. During this period, there were two types of Filipino immigrants that came to the U.S.: the *pensionados* (Filipino students) and the farm workers. “One reason of training Filipinos in lessons of self-rule was to create a pool of qualified, highly educated civil servants embodying the American ideals” (Mateo 2001:1). On the other side of economic spectrum are the farm worker immigrants. “They worked many long hours on farms and agricultural fields ... in places like Hayward, Salinas, Stockton, El Centro and even in Escondido. In Alaska they worked in the fish canneries” (Northern California Pilipino American Student Organization 2006:1). During this time, racism against Filipinos was widespread especially in farmlands. The growing Filipino communities becoming a social problem led to the passing of the Tydings-Mcduffie Act of 1934, “which limited Filipino immigration to the U.S.A. to 50 per year. Its main purpose was to exclude Filipinos because they were perceived as a social problem, disease carriers, and economical threat” (Northern California Pilipino American Student Organization 2006:1).

This negative attitude against Filipino immigrants changed during and after World War II. Marina Claudio-Perez narrates that in 1946, when the Philippines became an independent nation, “Filipinos were allowed to increase their immigration to the U.S. to 100 a year” (1998:1). The last wave of migration started after the declaration of Immigration Act of 1965. “This allowed the entry of as many as 20,000 immigrants annually. This wave of Filipinos was also called the ‘brain drain.’ It consisted mainly of professionals: doctors, lawyers, nurses, engineers, as well as military” (Northern California Pilipino American Student Organization 2006:1). In the year 2004, the United States Census counted 2,148,227 who identified their ancestry as Filipino. This number is speculated to be higher if it will include the undocumented Filipinos (U.S. Census Bureau 2005:1).

This brief historical background sheds light to the present social and economic condition of many Filipinos today. In some valuable aspects, it particularly illumines the rationale why some of the participants, acts, behave, live and think in a certain way. This information will be explained further in the analysis section.

#### History of Filipino Religious Groups in the United States

In the book *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans*, Steffi San Buenaventura wrote a chapter entitled “Filipino Folk Spirituality and Immigration: From Mutual Aid to Religion.” This essay discusses how Filipino religiosity contributed in forming the identity of early Filipino immigrants. It also tackles how religion assisted in dealing with various crises connected with migration. “Many of the pioneering Filipinos used their indigenous resources to face—and even shape—their destiny in America” (San Buenaventura 1999:53). Furthermore, the author also outlines how “a Filipino religion—

founded on nativist spirituality but made in America—came full circle, back to the home country, but only after having incorporated elements of American culture immigrant experience” (1999:53). In the early years of Filipino migration, they formed different associations and aid societies. “These organizations became an extension of a highly Filipino tradition of mutual help (*tulungan*) in which assisting kin, neighbors, friends, and those in need came naturally and with reciprocal benefits” (1999:54). These organizations would later develop as Filipino American syncretistic religions. San Buenaventura further notes that “Politically they were committed to promoting ‘friendly relations’ between the Philippines and the United States and were strongly in favor of the immediate independence of the Philippines” (1999:55).

The author traces one significant movement that surfaces above the others, called *Filipino Federation of America*. A charismatic religious individual name Hilario Camino Moncado was the central figure of the movement. Together with the group’s “John the Baptist,” named Lorenzo de los Reyes, they “created a phenomenon that melded the power of their folk spirituality with the vitality of their American experience” (1999:78). Furthermore, “As a social movement, it celebrates the culture of folk spirituality and wisdom—which energized a group of immigrants to triumph over the hardships of their collective struggle and to bear the spirit of their Filipinoness into the realm of native mystical empowerment” (1999:79).

In another book, a chapter entitled “Asian Americans and United Methodism,” specifically deals with Filipino Americans in their experience of pioneering United Methodist Churches. Artemio Guillermo, both the editor of the book and author of the chapter, “Gathering of the Scattered: History of Filipino American United Methodist

Churches,” traces the formation of Filipino United Methodist Churches in the United States and relates it with sociocultural issues such as assimilation, ethnicity, and racism. For example, he emphasizes that the initial articulation of the call for UMC churches to be sensitive to the spiritual need of ethnic minorities was not won without a struggle. In the 70s, racism was a stumbling block in allowing ethnic communities to form religious groups. Guillermo asserts, “While racism reared its ugly visage in the form of cultural oppression, it failed to dampen the burning zeal of Filipino Protestants to witness in their own distinct spiritual expressions” (Guillermo 1991: 98-99). Another area of concern during this time was assimilation. Unlike before when Filipino Methodists advanced exclusive Filipino local churches, coexistence became a growing option during the postwar period “as more Filipinos entered white churches, where before they were not welcomed” (1991:99). Guillermo specifically discussed nine key local churches emphasizing the variety of each one’s experiences, particularly the struggle between inclusivism and exclusivism or between assimilating to a multicultural church and having a Filipino local church on their own. At any rate, he emphasizes in his summary, “With a new generation of Filipino leaders who are surfacing in many of these ethnic churches, there is a strong indication that Filipino American churches will thrive in the richly pluralistic environment of The United Methodist Church” (1991:111). In his concluding statement he asserts, “Filipinos in America are still in their faith journey as they gather together in their own houses of worship to witness in their own distinct cultural identity for their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (1991:112).

## The History of the Two Churches

The differential factors that run in the groups' history are supplementary information that has helped me understand how the groups progressed into their present forms.

The first group is from the First Filipino American United Methodist Church. On September 1, 1992, a group of young married couples decided that it is time to form a Filipino United Methodist Church in the area. The church's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary program indicates that "the influx of young immigrants, who also possessed the same faith and belief with that of those who have migrated earlier, made the group bold in their declaration" (The First Filipino American United Methodist Church 10<sup>th</sup> Chartering Anniversary Worship Program, 2006:1). Most of the pioneers were long time member of United Methodist local churches in the Philippines. Being active in church work back home, they brought that same zeal and experience when they come to the United States as immigrants. Ever since it was founded, the church has been focused in its evangelism prospects, which are Filipino immigrants. Many of the members believe that being a monocultural church is their main strength into drawing more Filipinos in their church family.

The second group is from the United Methodist Church in Union. The church was organized in the town of Union in the year 1927. During that time, the town was basically a quiet small farmland in need of a village-type chapel that would serve people's spiritual needs. According to the church's history:

The District office sent a full time minister, Rev. Alfred Willett, who also implemented the initial steps in constructing a church building. Money was raised, members were added, and souls were saved. From then on, the church grew in spirituality and numbers. (Hinman 1986:1)

After World War II, there was “a phenomenal growth in both industry and home building which in turn brought more people to Union” (Allen 1962: 25). In spite of these changes, like the majority of old churches, the UMC in Union during those years was still not multiethnic in racial composition but entirely Caucasian. Like some church members describe it, it was a “lily white congregation.” In fact, it was only about thirty years ago, that the church for the first time received a church member who was non-Caucasian. Abayomi joined the church, and he is a native of Liberia.

Many years after, the church was appointed a pastor who was a native of Puerto Rico. Rev. Jorge Sanchez slowly introduced the prospect of inviting new people in the community who are of other cultural backgrounds. Cathy, the church’s current secretary narrates, “A few more people of African descent and a few Filipinos had joined the congregation. This was the time when the seed was being planted towards growth of new organism of rich multi-ethnicity” (Reeves 2005:1). After a few years, another non-Caucasian pastor was appointed to the church. Rev. Anna Thomas was a woman pastor from India. Cathy adds,

It was Rev. Anna Thomas who led us into spiritual breakthroughs and to the spirit of multiethnicity. In greater and greater leaps, we began to embrace and truly welcome people from all over the world, different colors, races, ethnicities. We found, in the capitalization of this multi-ethnicity, we were fellowshipping more and more with each other. (2005:1)

Eventually, the church’s multiethnicity became its main asset and strength. The church now has about twenty nationalities in the racial composition of its membership and it consists of about 10 Filipino families.

### Demography

This section gives a brief description of the demographical condition of the place where the research on Filipino migration was conducted and where the research participants reside. The information gathered concerns only those who are significantly connected to the immigrant population in general and the Filipino community in particular. This investigation covers both the larger setting, which is the state of New Jersey and the micro setting, which is Union County and Jersey City.

#### New Jersey

The United States Census Bureau states:

New Jersey's Asian American population nearly doubled from 1990 to 2000, making it the fifth-largest Asian population in a U.S. state, according to a census profile released today by the Asian American Federation of New York. The document reports that due mainly to immigration, the number of Asian Americans in New Jersey jumped by 95 percent, from 270,839 to 527,594, in the last decade. (Asian American Federation 2004:1)

Filipinos shares 18 percent of this total, or 95,063, which make them third in ranked among Asians, next to the Indian and Chinese communities (2004:1). In this Census Profile, its also shows that, "Asian Americans have more education, higher household and family incomes, and lower general and child poverty, but less English ability, lower per capita income, and higher elderly poverty than overall population" (2004:1).

#### Union County and Union Town

Both the church building and the second group participants are located in Union County. According to one study, 40 percent of the County's residents are *established urban immigrants*. "These are multiracial, multilingual neighborhoods populated by immigrants and descendants of many ancestries. They tend to be big families with



multiple incomes from trade and public service” (General Board of Global Ministry of the United Methodist Church 2003:1).

According to the Census Bureau, out of Union County’s overall population of 522,541, “3.8% of this belongs to the Asian community” (U.S. Census Bureau 2005:1). In another study, it shows that, “more than two-thirds (68.8%) of the state’s Filipino population resided in Hudson, Bergen, Middlesex, Essex and Union County” (New Jersey Department of Labor, Division of Labor Market and Demographic Research 2001:1). The increasing presence of Filipinos in the county and town where the group of participants are located explains much about their communal structure, support system, and political participation.

Union Township itself also demonstrates its significant Filipino presence. One main indication is the several Filipino businesses and organizations that flourish in the town, such as Filipino stores, Filipino civic groups, Filipino political organizations, Filipino churches, etc. The research participants in this study have witnessed and are part not only of the steady growth of Filipino residents but also of how the town is slowly being transformed into a multicultural community.

#### Jersey City

Although most of the residents of the second research group are also from Union County, their church is located in Jersey City. While the church of the first group is situated in a locality that is currently in the process of social and cultural change, the church of the second group is situated in a place where plurality and multiethnicity have been well-recognized social occurrences for many decades. Part of this is the significant presence of Filipino American residents. According to Asian American Federation of

New York Census Information Center, by the year 2000, the total population of Filipinos in Jersey City was 16,777, which represents 7 percent of the total population of 240,055. Furthermore, the Filipinos population growth from 1990 to 2000 is 44 percent (Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center 2004:2). Due to this considerable number of Filipinos in one concerted city that First Filipino American United Methodist Church (FFAUMC) was able to start and is still able to productively advance its work productively.

### Instrumentation/Data Collection—Observation Level

Data collection is also regarded in this study as the observation level. During this initial stage, information is gathered from participant observation, focus groups and interview sessions. This section is divided into three parts. The first is the chronological account of the focus groups and interview sessions, Level 1. The second is the narration of the initial categorization I have done with the data collected. The third is the chronological account of the focus group, Level 2.

#### The Chronological Account, Level 1

This section narrates the entire period of interviews and focus group sessions. Each group met for two sessions and nine interviews were conducted. The focus group has 32 participants altogether—13 from the first group and 19 from the second group. The profile of the participants is indicated in Appendix A. The profile includes their age, regional birthplace, years in residence in the United States, migrations status, and occupation. This chronological narration helps the reader see the complete context of the categorized narration I make in the next section. After the sessions, I transcribed the video and audio recordings into written form.

## Focus Group Session Level 1 Transcript

First Group: Bible Study Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church

Number of Participants: 13

Date: March 11, 2006, First Session

Place: Page Family Residence

Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes (6:30-9:00 p.m.)

Although the meeting was scheduled for 6:00 p.m., people arrived about 20 minutes after the scheduled time. The meeting started at about 6:30 p.m. with a supper prepared by the host. This meal fellowship time consumed about one hour. Some ate in the Filipino traditional way (*kamayan*—eating with bare hands). Some were talking to each other in their regional dialect. The Bible study started at 7:30 with an opening hymn entitled, *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*. They sang it in English.

After the hymn singing, Puno the pastor of the church gave an opening prayer in *Tagalog*. Kay, the host and the leader of the Bible study group, introduced me and my purpose for coming.

Tonight we will divert for a while from our Bible study topic.... And I won't call them visitors.... *Kasama natin ngayon ang isa sa mga partners natin sa ministry. Sa mga hindi nakakaalam, si Pastor Llenado ang pastor sa Union UMC* [we have with us one of our partners in ministry. For those who do not know, Pastor Llenado is the pastor of Union UMC]. Tonight, with his dissertation, he will be part of our study.

I presented the overall purpose of the meeting and the theme of my study through a sequence of projector slides. Following is a summary of the presentation:

Title: Developing a Contextual Theology of Postcolonial Filipino American Diasporic Identity

Lay person's term: to develop an applicable theology that is receptive to and useful for Filipino immigrants in the United States.

Goal: Through the research method focus group that will be done during bible study sessions, I hope to identify cultural, theological and missiological elements that are essential in developing a contextual theology reflective and receptive to the concerns of Filipinos in diaspora.

### The Mechanics:

1. In this study, I will use the research method: participant observation, focus group, and interview.
2. Composition: For Group 1: Filipinos and other ethnic background. For Group 2: All Filipinos.
3. In this meeting, I will use video and audio recorders.
4. I will limit myself in discussion and participation. I will only facilitate and observe.

### Your Participation

5. As you study together, you will be observed by the researcher, noting data that are significant with the goal and theme of the research.
6. Some of you may be asked to be interviewed individually or as a group.

### Confidentiality and Your Right to Receive a Copy.

7. Your identity in this research pilot study will be treated with strict confidentiality. To assure discretion, participants will be given pseudonyms. Data will be stored securely and is only accessible to the researcher.
8. The participants will also be given opportunity to receive a comprehensive summary of the research findings upon completion or before it is handed in for submission.
9. Due to research ethics I won't reveal what specific things I will observe, take note of and use in my study.

I distributed the *Informed Consent Form* (see Appendix H) and gave them enough time to read and complete it. I then opened the study by explaining the topic for the session, which is *The Diaspora People and their Economic Flight*. Before going to the text, I asked some introductory questions. The first question was, “*Saang probinsya kayo galing at ano ang unique sa inyong probinsya?* [From what province did you come from and what is unique about your province?]. The discussion was filled with a lot of reminiscing about their lives in the Philippines. It was evident how they enjoyed talking about this topic.

Enong: *Sa amin po sa Apari Cagayan, maraming Chinese. Halo-halo, Ilokano, Ibanag* [In our place in Appari, Cagayan, there are so many Chinese. And it is also diverse—Ilocano, Ibanag].

Ada: *Novaliches, ako ay taal na Tagalog. Pero, ang mga unang miembro duon ay “no-read-no-write,” mga farmers. Ang tatay ko ang nagsimula ng church sa Novaliches. Ang mga tao duon ay plain na magsasaka—agrikultura. Natuto ang mga miembro magbasa, dahil may pastor na*

*nagconduct ng mga reading classes. Tapos lumago* [My province in Novaliches, I am a *Tagalog*. But that first members were “no-read-no-write,” they were farmers. My father started the church in Novaliches. The people there are plain farmers—agricultural. The members (of the church) learned how to read because a certain pastor conducted reading classes]. Then it grew.

The discussion shifted to regionalism. I then asked the question whether they think Filipinos bring regionalism to the United States when they migrate. Two opposing views surfaced. Two participants mainly spoke for each of the views:

Ariel: I think *naiiwan na sa Pilipinas. Dahil dito, ikaw ay minority na, ang pinaka-major commonality na ay ikaw ay Pilipino. Kapag ikaw ay Pilipino kasama na kita*” [I think it is being left in the Philippines. Because here you are a minority, your major commonality is you are a Filipino. If you are a Filipino, you are with me].

Kay: If you join a group that is all Filipino, that [regionalism] comes out. But if you [a Filipino] mingle with other races, you stand as one—Filipinos—no matter what region you came from.

During the argument, it was apparent how Ariel became defensive but later on conceded because the majority of the participants support Kay’s view.

After the introductory questions, I led the group in reading the following passages:

Genesis 47: 1-12; 47:13-26; Exodus 1:1-22. Kay, Ligaya and Ener volunteered to read.

After explaining the background of the passage, I then asked the first question: “According to verse 4, why did Joseph’s family migrate to Egypt? If it was not for economic reason, do you think they will still want to transfer to a foreign land?” The group unanimously disagreed. They believe that if it not for economic reasons, they would have stayed where they were. I then applied the principle into their present situation saying, “Is economic status the main reason why Filipinos migrate?” Kay said, “Absolutely.” The group agreed with her. I then ask a more personal follow-up question: “Is the economic condition the only reason why you are here?” The participants gave

simultaneous response but most of them said “No.” Puno said, “*Merong hindi economic. Pumunta ako dito bilang delegado ng General Conference. Tapos nakita ko ang pangangailangan. Puede naman siguro na ako ay maglingkod dito*” [There are those who are not economic reason. I went here as a delegate for the General Conference. Then I saw the need and thought that it is possible to serve here].

I then moved to question 2. I asked, “What was Joseph’s consumer policy with those who asked for food but don’t have money? (see Gen. 47:18-21). Do you think this policy raised ethical and moral questions regarding issues on abuse of economic power?” Again there were differences of opinion. Many said, it is like a barter system and Joseph was just doing his job as someone under Pharaoh. There were a few who disagreed with that point. The discussion was brought into the context of their own situations. Here are some of the discussions:

Enong: *Dito kasi hindi inuuna ang mga immigrants. We are the second class citizens. Ang example dyan yung job opportunities* [Because here they don’t prioritize the immigrants. We are the second class citizens. And the example for that are job opportunities].

Kay: Privilege *ang maging* US citizen. *Merong talagang privilege differences between citizens and immigrants. Sa tingin ko ok lang ito dahil ito and batas dito* [There are indeed different privileges between citizens and immigrants. But I think this is just fine because it is the law of the land].

Greg: *Sa tingin ko unfair. Kasi dahil permanent resident ka na, bakit ang privileges mo ay mas mababa pa rin sa citizen?* [I think it is unfair. Because you are already a permanent resident, why is it that your privileges are lower than the citizens?]

Participants: [simultaneous response] there are many differences between being an immigrant and a citizen.

I discontinued that part of the discussion and moved to the next question. I explained, “Jacob and his family were treated well in Egypt as immigrants (47:6) but other famine

survivors were treated as slaves (47:21).” I then asked, “Do you see this condition as a similar depiction of current immigrants—some are treated well, some is not?”

Kay: Yeah I think so. There is unequal treatment.

Ariel: I think *merong ibang preference laban sa atin* [I think there is a different preference against us]. If you are applying for a job position, even if your credential is better than another immigrant, if they see your color, they will make the preference for a white immigrant.

The next questions I asked were, “Why were Jacob and his clan assigned to settle in Goshen? (47:33). From this narrative, let us make some reflections with Filipinos’ job opportunities in the United States. In general, do Filipino immigrants practice their profession in the United States.? Why or why not and how do you feel about it?” There was a lot of response from this set of questions.

Enong: *Sa ngayon hindi na kagaya ng dati. Dati pagdoctor ka, makakapagtrabaho ka bilang doctor. Ngayon hindi na* [Now, its not like before. Before, if you are a doctor, you can work as a doctor. Now you cannot].

Kay: *Ang isang dahilan ay dahil sa mga immigrants; naaagawan sila ng trabaho* [One of the reasons is because of the immigrants; their jobs are being taken away from them].

Ariel: *Marami kasi recently na pumupunta dito na nakikipagsapalaran na lang. Kaya kahit mababang trabaho kukunin huwag lang mauwi at para sila magsurvive dito* [Because there are many who take the risk of coming here. So, even if the job is not suited to them, they will accept it just for them to stay and survive].

Researcher to Ariel: How do you feel about it?

Ariel: *Naawa ako sa kanila. Dito nagsisimula ang broken families. Kasi aabutan ng lungkot yung immigrant at yung asawa na iniwan niya. Kaya hahanap ng iba.* This is so sad. *Ano na ang magiging morality sa Pilipinas at dito rin* [I have compassion for them. Broken families start here. Because sadness will come to an immigrant and to the spouse she or he left at home. So they will look for another. This is so sad. What will happen to the morality of the Philippines and also here?]

Kay: *Yung mga kakilala ko na mga professionals, hindi nila matanggap na mababa ang mga trabaho nila. Ang hirap yung area ng acceptance* [Those professionals whom I know, they still cannot accept the fact that their job is not suited for them. Acceptance is so hard to do].

Enong: *Meron akong kakilala na doctor siya sa Pilipinas. Inuutusan niya mga nurses. Pagdating dito siya ang inuutusan nung the same nurses na inuutusan niya sa Pilipinas* [I know someone who was a doctor in the Philippines. He gave order to nurses. When he arrived here, those nurses whom he gave orders in the Philippines are the same nurses who give orders to him].

Greg: *Pagdating ko dito na-culture shocked ako. Sa Pilipinas ako ang boss, dito ako ang busabos* [When I got here, I was culture-shocked. In the Philippines, I was the boss, while here I am the ill-treated slave). He added, "*Pero maraming tumutulong na mga tao sa akin*" (But there was a lot of people who helped me].

Enong: *Meron pa akong isang kakilala. Mayari siya ng gasolinahan sa Pilipinas. Dito Gasoline boy siya* [I know another person. He owns a gasoline station in the Philippines. Here he is a gasoline attendant].

Lina: Psychologically *may effect ito sa mga immigrants*. [Psychologically, it has an effect on immigrants].

I slightly deviated from my question outline and went with the flow of the discussion. I asked, "Aside from these, what other struggles are experienced by Filipino immigrants here in the U.S?"

Kay: Communication struggle.

Ener: *Kahit sinasabi mo na hindi pa rin naiintindihan. Kasi yun pala yung accent* [Even if you say something (in English), they still don't understand. It is because of the accent].

Reasearcher: *Sa inyo bang bahay, Tagalog ninyo kinakausap ang mga anak ninyo?* [In your house, do you talk to your children in Tagalog?]

Kay: *Dumating ang mga anak namin dito magaaral na sila kaagad sa kinder school. Sa kagustuhan namin na makaadapt sila kaagad dito, kinakausap nami sila ng English sa bahay hanggang nawala na ang Tagalog* [When our children came here, they immediately enrolled to kinder school. Because we wanted them to immediately adapt, we talked to them in English in the house until the Tagalog was totally forgotten].



Ariel: *Sa mga anak ko rin English ang communication ko* [To my children, English is my way of communication].

Enong: *Bilang translator dun sa work ko, merong problema akong nakikita kaya nahihirapan ang mga bata sa communication, lalo ng yung mga kadarating pa lang. Nalilito ang mga bata dahil nagkakahalo yung pagtuturo sa kanila ng English at Tagalog* [As a translator in my work, I see a problem with their (Filipino) children with regard to communication, most especially those who just came. The children get confused because mixed English and Tagalog are being taught to them].

Ada: *Nadedelay ang speech nila dahil nagkakahalo ang English at Tagalog. Sa Church naman, parang ganon din. Ang Gospel ay binabasa sa Tagalog. Ngayon, hindi maintindihan ng mga youth. Merong verse sa Corinthians na, “ang pangangaral ay dapat naiintindihan ng nakikinig”* [Their speech is delayed because English and Tagalog is mixed. In our church, it is like that. The gospel is being read in Tagalog. Now, the youth cannot understand. There is a verse in Corinthians that says, “Preaching should be understood by the listeners.”]

After much discussion, I asked the question, “Is it spiritually wrong to forget one’s culture?” Although some of the participants disagreed in some areas, most of them agreed that forgetting one’s culture is not spiritually wrong. Ariel recapitulated the discussion saying, “*Isang pribelehiyo na magkaroon ng dalawang culture* [It is a privilege to have two cultures].” He added, “*Nasa atin yung dalawang kultura na puede nating maalis yung pangit sa pareho at kunin yung parehong maganda. Sa akin, hindi disadvantage yung dalawa*, it is a privilege [We have two cultures so that we can remove the ugly and take the good. For me, having two is not an advantage but a privilege].” When I asked the group, what one cultural trait or perspective do they want to keep and pass on to their children, almost all of them said, “Respect for elderly.” Some also pointed to *family ties* and *morality*.

When the discussion shifted to the immigrant's spiritual experience, I asked a question that I intended to ask in another topic: "Does the difficulty of migration lead immigrants to seek for spiritual answers and a spiritual community?"

Puno: *Noong ako ay bago dito, wala pa noon ang asawa ko, ako 'y walang ginawa kug hindi maghanap ng mga palabas sa TV ng mga messages, at ako ay nananalangin. Doon sa panahon ng pangungulila ko, lalo akong napalapit sa Dios* [When I was new here, my wife was not here yet, I always looked for TV shows that have messages and I always pray. In my time of lonesomeness, I became closer to God].

Kay: *Picture yourself, Wala kang kamaganak, mayroon kang mga kakilala hindi mo naman sila kaibigan, iba ang pagkain, iba ang salita, iba ang lugar, iba ang way of life nila, saan ka lalapit?*" [You don't have relatives, you know some people but they are not your friends, the food is different, the language is different, the places are different, the way of life is different, where will you go?]

Ariel: *Kung baga ay para kang dumadaan sa wilderness. It is a wilderness kaya nagiging espiritual ang mga tao* [As if you are going through a wilderness. It is a wilderness that's why people get spiritual].

It seems that the room was filled with a feeling of sadness. They brought up how fortunate they are to find a spiritual community that supports them. I then asked how they as a faith community can, in turn, reach out to people outside the church: "In the midst of all diaspora difficulties, *ano ang ministry na kayang i-offer ng church sa mga immigrants?* [What ministry could the church offer to immigrants?]"

Ariel: *Yung damayan, ginagawa naman natin wala nga lang sa ating church program. Ito ang kailangan nating gawin dahil marami ditong nangungulila. Bahay, trabaho, trabaho, bahay. Nangungulila sila* [This damayan (sharing), we do this, although it is not in our church program. This is what we should do because there are many people here who are in isolation and loneliness: home, job, job and home. They are so sad].

Enong: *Noon pa man, ang pagtulong sa mga bagong dating na Pilipino immigrants, yun na ang ginagawa namin. Marami ng grupo ng mga nurses ang mga natulungan namin* [Since we started here, helping newly arrived immigrants, this is what we do. We already helped many groups of nurses].

Greg: *Totoo yan. Malaki ang magagawa ng church. Meron ngang nagsabi sa akin, huwag daw akong bumili ng kotse. Yun pala bibigyan niya ako ng kotse* [That is true. The church can do something big. In fact, someone told me not to buy a car. Amazingly, he gave me a car].

Puno: *Noong kami'y bago dito, mayroong mga tumulong sa amin. At ang sabi nila, yan din ang karanasan nila, kaya tumutulong din sila sa iba* [When we were new, there were also people who helped us. And they said, that is also their experience that's why they are also helping others].

Ada: *Ang lagi kong sinasabi sa mga anak ko, kahit saan kayo mapuntang lugar, ang unang-unang gagawin ninyo ay maghanap ng isang Methodist Church, at magpakilala kayo. At malaki ang maitutulong ng mga pastor sa Pilipinas dito. Kung alam nila na may meimbro na pupunta sa abroad, sabihin nila na pumunta sa Methodist church. Basta Methodist kahit hindi Filipino Methodist church* [I always say to my children that wherever you go, always look for a Methodist church and introduce yourself as a Methodist in the Philippines. And pastors could help a lot with this. If they know that they have a church member who will go abroad, they should advise their parishioners to look for a Methodist church, as long as it is Methodist, even if it is not a Filipino Methodist].

Enong: *Saka yun namang ibinibigay mo sa iba, ibinabalik naman ng Dios sa iyo* [And whatever you give, God will give it back to you].

Because of time constraint, we were not able to do the second part. I decided to do it the next time. I wrapped up the meeting and gave them a preview of the topic that we will discuss the next time we meet. The meeting ended with a short prayer. Kay asked if anyone had any request for prayer. Kay listed a number of prayer concerns. We ended about 9:00 p.m. Those people who decided to stay a little bit more expressed their appreciation for being part of a study about migration. Most of them said that this is the first time they read the Scriptures from the point of view of an immigrant.

Focus Group Session Transcript

First Group: Bible Study Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church

Number of Participants: 13

Date: March 25, 2006, Second Session

Place: Page Family Residence

Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes (6:30-9:00 p.m.)

As did the group's first session, the meeting commenced with the singing of a hymn. Very briefly, I reviewed the theme and the purpose of the study. I asked the participants to read Daniel chapter 1. After reading, I asked the first question: "In verse 5, it is written that the young Israelites who were chosen to serve the king were educated for three years with the literature and language of the Chaldeans. Setting aside the resolve of Daniel and his friends, what will usually happen to someone who undergoes such forced learning?"

Ariel: *malilimutan niya yung kanyang pinaggalingan* [They will forget where they came from].

Simultaneous answer: They will be brainwashed.

Lita: People will try to resist. *Depende sa tao kung ready siya to accept kung ano ang tinuturo sa kanya. Pero kung hindi, magrebelde sila* [It depends on a person and if he or she is ready to accept what is being taught. But if not, he or she will rebel].

Greg: *Ilang taon na ba sila* [How old were they?]

Ariel: *Mga kabataan pa sila* [They were young people].

Greg: *Kagaya ni Daniel, hindi ko malilimutan ang pinaggalingan ko* [Just like Daniel, I won't forget where I came from].

I made a follow-up question applying the points they just mentioned to their own situation. *Ano ang kulturang hindi mo makakalimutan at ano ang kultura na kaya mo namang icompromise para makatulong na maka-assimilate ka?* [What are the cultural

traits or perspectives that you won't forget, and what are those that you're willing to compromise for you to assimilate?]

Greg: *sa akin respeto—lalo na respeto sa nakakatanda* [For me its respect—especially respect for the elderly].

Participants: *Pagmamano, pagagalang, respeto* [Pagmamano (a Filipino gesture as a sign of respect); respect].

Greg: Majority *yata* respect *dahil pinakaimportante yan sa lahat* [I think majority is respect because that is the most important].

Leo: Hospitality.

Enong: Family Ties, *bayanihan* [helping together].

Kay: Family ties

Greg: *Pagmatanda dito dinadala na sa* home for the aged—family ties [If you become old here, you will be brought to the home for the aged].

The next question was, “Like Daniel, have you ever experienced racial persecution or misunderstanding when you are trying to express your cultural identity? How did you respond (See Chapter 6:4-5 and verse 16)?”

Lita: *Sa akin yung attitude natin ng resiliency. Sa karanasan ko, minsan pinapagtawanan nila na parang weakness yung pagiging resilient natin. Kasi sila, madali sila sa confrontation* [In my experience, sometimes they laughed at me because they view my resiliency as weakness—because they can easily engage in confrontation]. But you know, to be resilient you really have to be tough. *Tayo* [We] are very resilient. We don't respond in a manner that they do. But they think we are passive and have a weak personality. I told one once that resiliency is not my weakness; that is your weakness. For me to think things over before saying anything is my strength. I think everything over before I answer you. That for me is power.

Ariel: *Sa akin simple lang. Yung different terminologies. Noon una kasi napagtawanan ako dahil ang sabi ko rubber shoes sa halip na sneakers. Minsan naman naglagay ako ng catsup sa spaghetti ko. Eh ganun tayo kumain eh* [For me it is simple: different terminologies. Because before, they laughed at me because I say rubber shoes instead of saying sneakers. Sometimes I put catsup in my spaghetti. But that is how we eat].

The next question was about their worship service: “Do you think a church member’s culture should be expressed in worship services? How is this beneficial to one’s own spirituality and how does this benefit the church as a whole?”

Ada: *Kasi yung gospel ay binabasa natin sa Tagalog. Hindi naiintindihan ng young people. Bakit hindi na lang ituloy yung pagbabasa sa Tagalog ng gospel pero* people will be encouraged to bring their own Bibles, so that they can follow in English [Because the gospel is being read in Tagalog. The young people can’t comprehend it. Why don’t we just continue that, but we should also encourage people to bring their Bibles so that they can follow in English?]

Greg: *Pero dapat talaga maipamana natin ang Tagalog sa mga kabataan. Kasi Pilipino pa rin sila* [But I think we should impart Tagalog to our youth. Because they are still Filipinos].

I made a follow-up question that was focused more on the aspect of morality. I asked, “How about if we apply this gap in the area of morality; do you think there is a cultural or generation gap between you and your kids who are born here?”

Ada: *Meron. Peron higit sa amin na mga seniors na--yung mga young adults, sila ang makakagawa ng bridge between the gap kaysa sa amin.* [Yes there is. But more than us seniors—the young adults can do better in bridging the gap].

Kay and Ener: *Nuong una hindi nila matanggap, paguwi ng before 12 p.m. They party and try other things. Pero later on nakinig naman sila sa amin* [Before, they (our children) can’t accept that they should be home before 12 p.m. They party and try other things. But later on, they listened to us].

After about 40 minutes of discussion, I led the group in proceeding to the next topic: *The Diaspora People and the Gospel*. I asked them to read the Bible passages, Acts 2:1-3; 8:1-4; and 11:19. I was not able to ask the first sets of observation questions due to time constraints, so I just gave them an overview explanation of the passage and headed to the more important questions. The first question was, “In chapter 8:1-8, do you think the believers would have not come out of Jerusalem to spread the gospel if a persecution did

not happen? Ariel replied, “Maybe they will stay home. The persecution,... I think it was a divine plan *para kumalat sila* [so that they will be scattered]”. Ariel added, “*kagaya ng* FFAUMC [just like FFAUMC], we are spreading the gospel to Filipinos here.”

I explained to the group that the next question is a little bit sensitive and I told them that they do not have to respond if they do not want to discuss these issues. I asked, “In the aspect of evangelism or the preaching of the gospel, do you think a monocultural church is better off staying as a monocultural church? How will this affect its evangelism efforts? Are there factors to consider if a monocultural church is better shifting to a multicultural church?”

Kay: It is a yes and a no. Our mission is to reach out to Filipinos but we need to also reach out to people of other races. Like for example some of our members are in interracial marriage.

Ariel: *Nagkaroon kami ng mga miembro na puti noon. Pero hindi nila feel at home. Dahil hindi sila nakakasama sa mga usapan dahil hindi nila kami naiintindihan lalo na sa mga fellowship. Maganda sana iyon pero gusto ko ang sundan natin ang leading ng Dios* [We had members before who are white. But they did not feel at home. Because they were not involved in the conversations, because they couldn’t understand us especially during fellowships. That (reaching out to people of other races) is really good, but I want us to follow the leading of God].

Kay: It is hard to have a regular conversation with an American.

Lita: In an idealistic point of view, *napakaganda noon* [that is indeed good]—that we spread the gospel multiculturally. But the success rate may not be as high as the success rate of getting people coming from the same culture as ours.

After about 20 minutes, I led the group in studying the last topic. I asked someone to read the first chapter of Nehemiah. The topic was, *The Diaspora People and their Homeland*. I asked, “In spite of Nehemiah’s comfortable position in a wealthy foreign land, why do

you think his heart was still in his homeland? Do we feel the same grief as Nehemiah with the economic, social and political condition of the Philippines?”

Greg: *ako’y palaging nanood ng TFC [Tagalog Filipino Channel]. At ako’y nalulungkot sa kalagayan ng Pilipinas. Gusto kong umuwi para makatulong. Pero mas maganda yata na nandito ako at mas malaki ang maitutulong ko* [I always watch TFC. I feel sad with the situation of the Philippines. I want to go home and help. But it’s much better that I am here because I can help much better].

I asked, “What does a ‘broken wall’ represents in the Nehemiah story? Using your interpretation of the ‘broken wall,’ how will the wall in the Philippines be rebuilt and what role should the immigrants play in realizing this?” Some of the participants referred to security, economic stability, and identity. They also pointed out that a broken wall can symbolize government corruption, a deflating economy and the degradation of moral standards.

There were a lot of discussions about the weak wall of the Philippines and they said it is because of graft and corruption. I asked another question: *Ano ang role ng* immigrants to restore the wall? (What is the role of the immigrants to restore the wall?)

Ariel: *tulungan natin ang mga immigrants dito. Abutin natin ang mga nangungulila* [Let us help the immigrants here. Let us reach out to those who are in isolation and sadness]. Many families are being separated by immigration. We, the church, can do something by helping the Filipino family to be strong.

Puno: *Merong mga grupo ng mga Pilipino Methodists dito sa atin na magmimisyon sa Pilipinas. Sila ay uuwi at magtatayo ng church* [There is a group of Filipino Methodists here who will return to the Philippines for mission. They will return home to build a church].

Greg: *Meron akong mga kakilala*, [I know some people] they divide their tithes between their church here and their home church in the Philippines.

Before I closed I asked if anyone has some final words.



Puno: *Nuong ako ay bago pa lang dito, merong mga tumulong sa akin. Ang sabi nila, kung ano itinulong nila, itulong ko raw sa mga bagong dating na immigrants na makikilala ko na tutulong naman din sa iba* [When I was new here, there were those who helped me. They said that whatever they have helped me, use it to helped others who are new here who can later on also help others].

Ener: *Ang ating pagpunta dito ay kagagawan lahat ng Dios. Dinala niya tayo para makapagdala ng magandang balita, lalo na sa kapwa natin Pilipino. Hindi by chance ang pagpunta namin dito...Ginagamit tayo ng Dios dito bilang diaspora Filipinos* [Our migration here is all part of God's plan. God brought us here so that we can bring the good news, most especially to Filipinos like us. It is not by chance that we are here. God is using us as diaspora Filipinos].

Ariel: *May purpose ang Paginooon kaya na-form yung church natin. Kaya nandon tayo. Kaya nandon ka, Lita* [God has a purpose why our church has been formed. That is why we are there. That is why you are there, Lita].

Lita: *Kaya nga may sagot ako doon: yung boldness and eagerness to share the gospel* [That is why I have an answer to that: the boldness and eagerness to share the gospel].

Lita (continuation): Before, when I was young, I was active in church. And then I married a Roman Catholic *kaya nawala ako sa church* [that is why I was disconnected from the church]. *Pagpunta ko dito sa States nalaman nila Enong and Ligaya* [When I came here to the States, Enong and Ligaya knew about it]. And they followed me up. I sometimes feel that I am being harassed. But they did not give up. That is why I am here.

Ada: For me, to share whatever I am receiving here. *Hindi lang sa mga kamaganak kundi yung mga senior citizen sa church namin.* The fact na *binigyan ako na Panginoon ng pagkakataon na mapunta dito na hindi naman binigay sa marami, yung ang aking purpose—to share* [To share whatever I am receiving here—not only with my relatives but with the senior citizens of my (home) church. The fact that God has given me the opportunity to be here, which is not given to others—that is my purpose—to share].

Enong: We serve as the bridge or the link between the new Filipino immigrants and the society. *Alam natin na marami ang napapariwara. Pero, kung ma-guide natin sila, mapupunta sila sa tamang landas* [we know that many (Filipinos) lost their ways. But if we will guide them, they will be in the right direction].

I closed with a brief admonition, reminding the participants that Jesus understands their pain and difficulties because he was once an immigrant on this earth. I also read to them James 1:1-3, which is an encouragement to scattered Christians to remain strong in diaspora life.

Finally, I expressed my deep appreciation for the group's participation. Kay responded,

*Hindi po namin narealized noon na biblical pala ang pagiging-immigrant. Kaya maraming salamat po [We didn't realize before that being an immigrant is biblical. So we really thank you]. So the feeling is mutual, we really appreciate you sharing this with us.*

Again, the meeting ended with the gathering of prayer concerns and praying for one another.

Focus Group Session Level 1 Transcript

Second Group: Bible Study Group, The United Methodist Church in Union

Number of Participants: 19

Date: April 2, 2006, First Session

Place: Parsonage of the Church, Union, New Jersey

Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes (1:00-3:30 p.m.)

The first session of the second group met after their worship service in the church's parsonage. This Bible study group is part of a multiethnic congregation. The racial composition of the participants in this study is, therefore, diverse. Prior to the Bible study, the participants fellowshiped over the meal I prepared. Each one seems to enjoy the Filipino dishes I served them. Knowing that the topic of study is migration and culture, I overheard them talking to each other about their various cultural expressions even before the Bible study started. I also observed that everyone avoided speaking in their own dialects in respect to those who may be offended by not understanding the conversation.

As I did with group 1, I gave them a short introduction as to the theme and goal of my research. After the introduction, I presented the Informed Consent Form and asked them to read and complete it. Before going to the first topic, I presented to them the four topics that we are going to discuss for the next two Sundays. We commenced with the first Bible study session entitled, *The Diaspora People and their Economic Flight*. I asked someone to read the first texts in Genesis 47: 1-12; 47:13-26; and Exodus 1:1-22.

The first question was, “Why did Joseph’s family migrate to Egypt? If it wasn’t for economic reasons, do you think they would still want to transfer to a foreign land?” Everyone agreed that they left economic reasons and probably would not have migrated for any other purpose. There was a little discussion about the famine that Jacob and his family have experienced. After that brief discussion, I asked them an application question: “Would you have migrated to the U.S. if it wasn’t for economic reason?” They had many responses.

Isla: I migrated here for economic reason. As a nurse in the Philippines, I am getting a very low salary. My father said, “I will not pay for your college tuition unless you will be a nurse so that you can go to America.” And so I have no choice.

Lando: I have a very good job in the Philippines. But my wife convinced me to go here. She went here first and so I have to follow my wife. So I guess it is both economic and family.

Abayomi: Economic is one. I left Liberia earning \$50 a month. However, the primary situation is because in Liberia, I perform secret service work for the President of Liberia. When you come to an African country from another African country, your head can be easily cut off. There were so many coup d’état. I will not be a statistics. I went here while I am still alive. [The participants all laugh].

Manj: I was a civil engineer in the Philippines. I am doing well. But I want to be with my wife, and also this is a land of opportunity; you know the money is here. In the Philippines, I also earn a lot as a civil engineer. But

she encouraged me to come here. My second purpose is family—you know, being together. Plus of course, the money is here.

Participants: (With laughter, people responded to Manj simultaneously), “Where?”

After that, I gave the second question: “What was Joseph’s consumer policy with those who asked for food but do not have money (See 47:18-21)? Do you think this policy raised ethical and moral questions regarding issues on abuse of economic power?” There had various opinions:

Abayomi: I see now where rich nations learned it from. Rich nations will not give millions of dollars to developing countries unless there is something in that country. That is unethical. This is where America learned it from. America is earning millions of dollars from developing countries.

Isla: Bartering. That is fair. That is trade.

Abayomi: Israel, not the biblical Israel, has a lot of atrocities. When you have this resolutions [sic] condemning Israel, America goes from country to country, to sanction Israel. They’ll say “You come from the Philippines. I will treat your project, if you vote on behalf of this project, I will talk with the people of the hills and your project will be taken care of. But if you don’t vote, forget about your project.”

The third question was, “Jacob and his family were treated well in Egypt as immigrants (47:6) but other famine survivors were treated as slaves (47:21). Do you see this as a similar depiction of current immigrants—some are treated well, some are not?”

Abayomi: If you are from Cuba you are treated well, but if you are from Africa or from Caribbean you are treated poorly.

Manj: Sometimes it is a double standard. America goes easy [sic] for people from Canada than Mexicans.

The next question was, “Why were Jacob and his clan assigned to settle in Goshen (47:33)? From this narrative, let us make some reflections with the current job

opportunity in the U.S. In general, do immigrants practice their profession here in the United States? Why or why not and how do you feel about it?"

Iba: Very few people can actually do their profession from their countries—the same with people that are coming from Nigeria. A friend of mine was a travel accountant in Nigeria. Here he has to work in domestic jobs. A lot of people cannot be like what they were in Nigeria.

Oba: It depends where you are coming from and where you are going to. Why would you come from being a doctor to being a taxi driver? If you are coming as a tourist, don't stay here to work.

Freedom: After a few months, I got a good job here actually. Because I asserted to my agency for them not send me somewhere else but here in the U.S.

The next question was, "Does this scriptural story somehow justify immigrants' massive exodus in spite of the great ramification embedded in diaspora life (ramifications such as exploitation, abuse, identity crisis, family separation, etc.)?"

Iba: If what is important to you is to feed your family, my advice is that you go. If what is important to you is to be with your family, stay. I appreciate it that I was given the opportunity to go out because many people are not able to do this. Yes for me it is worth it but for others its not. It is directly tied to why you left in the first place.

The second part of the session is about the story of Daniel. After reading the passage, I explained the difficulties that Daniel experienced as an exile. I immediately applied this fact to the participants' context and asked, "What are the specific struggles you have experienced during your first weeks of living as an immigrant?"

Participants (simultaneous response): Transportation, weather, unable to work.

Freedom: It took me two months before starting my paper works [sic]. I can't work for two months! Man, I am not used to do that. There was a sense of meaninglessness that was developed within me. I felt that I have no purpose.

Lando: It took me 9 months. And it was totally a reversal of role. Because in the Philippines, I am the provider, but during those long 9 months, I stayed at home.

Abayomi: Weather. I got here Easter Sunday—an African kid coming to two feet of snow. (Everyone was laughing).

Jay: I was 12. I experienced a lot of culture shock. Kids here are not respectful to the elderly. Another one is language barrier. You have an accent—the hardest thing is getting to be in the “in crowd.” I was called an FOB: fresh off the boat. It is hard if you look differently; you talk differently.

After this discussion, I asked the question, “In reflection to Daniel’s story, do you think it is spiritually wrong to compromise one’s cultural identity to assimilate to the culture of a host country? Why and why not?”

Iba: It is troubling. Your culture is connected to your religion, especially in Africa. You can’t separate it. There is a thin line.

Freedom: We can always find the balance of maintaining our original culture and adapting with the culture here. Furthermore, if we retain these cultures [various immigrant cultures], this country will have a culture that will be an envy of the world. We should retain whatever we have and blend it with the culture here. It will be a combination of culture. In my own country, there are basically 6 cultures. That is why I know the value of cultural diversity.

The next question was, “In your experience, what are the cultural elements that you have compromised in order to assimilate to American culture and what are the cultural elements that you have preserved?”

Abayomi: Respect for elders.

Freedom: I will agree to that. You see if you are my child, you can’t tell me about my responsibility as the head of this home. We as parents can still make something to happen in that child by directing that child how to conduct himself despite of all that is happening around him. That is where our spiritual background should come in. That is our God-given role as parents.

Abayomi: Sadly, many immigrant young people, rather than assimilate to good habits, they go to opposite directions.

Iba: In Nigeria, the village was raising the child. Here it is your one lone voice in the wilderness.

Participants: respect for elders.

The next question was, “In finding the balance between assimilation and preservation, which is more advantageous for you—to join a multicultural church or to join a church of your own culture (monocultural)?”

Isla: I love people of other culture because we live in a country that is not just Filipinos. That is why I chose a diverse church.

Iba: In the Nigerian church, they bring the negatives in this society. I will still prefer a multicultural church. Plus, I want my kids to respect people of other culture because I also want people of other cultures to respect my kids.

Jay: I want a church that basically reflects our community. Our church reflects our community.

Lando: When we were in the Filipino church, the bad cultural traits in our country were brought in the church.

Abayomi: Twenty years ago, this was a “lily white church.” But that did not discourage me from attending the church. I was the first person of color that became part of this church.

Freedom: If I want to join a Guyanan church, I would have stayed in Guyana. The church basically reflects Union township. If you want to be successful here, you are to work in the community you are living in. This is my advice to my children: to always choose a multicultural environment—school, church, friends.

The session ended with the gathering of prayer concerns. I asked everyone to hold hands then form a big circle and I asked two people to pray in their own native dialect before I closed in prayer.

Focus Group Session Level 1 Transcript

Second Group: Bible Study Group, The United Methodist Church in Union

Number of Participants: 19

Date: April 9, 2006 Second Session

Place: Parsonage of the Church, Union, New Jersey

Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes (1:00-3:30 p.m.)

The second session was intended to cover the two remaining Bible study topics:

*The Diaspora People and the Gospel* and *The Diaspora People and their Homeland*.

Unfortunately, on that day when the group met, the church had an activity in which most of them were involved. As a result, only half of the intended time was used for the session and about half of the participants were late. In addition, most of them were not able to bring their Bibles. To maximize the remaining time left, instead of dwelling much on observing details in the biblical passage we studied, I did a summarized presentation of the biblical passage and went ahead with the application questions. Furthermore, I also skipped some of the questions listed in the study guide.

The session started at about 1:30 p.m. Most of them already had lunch while others just came from the church activity mentioned and started to have lunch while the discussion began. I started with a brief review of the purpose and theme of the study. I also reviewed some of the insights that were brought up during the last session and some who were absent the last time made additional remarks. In the topic concerning struggles of a new immigrant, the participants responded:

Hunyo: My children understand Tagalog but they cannot speak it. When they were young we use to teach them simultaneously two languages. The problem was they got confused especially when they were in school. So we decided to focus more on English so that they can also adapt easier.

Kenji: I don't really have that much of a struggle in growing up here. The only thing that has somehow offended me a little is when people generalized you as Chinese.



Kenshin: Same thing, I did not really struggle that much. Although I remember a funny story when I color the American Flag with yellow stars. People were laughing at me.

Licia: I have some problems with the young people here who don't have respect for the elderly. But we as parents, we see to it that our children will understand how to give respect. And we have good feedbacks from people about it that our children grew up like Filipinos—respectful.

I read to them the passage, which was, Acts 2:1-3. I explained to them how this passage implies that in the previous era, the Jews were scattered throughout the world because they were colonized and exiled. I also explained to them how the gospel was preached during Pentecost in languages that the listeners understood. Furthermore, I explained how migration experience has become a turning point to some immigrants to be more receptive to spiritual things and spiritual communities:

Hunyo: When we were new here, there were a lot of difficulties. That's why the first thing we asked was the location of the nearest Methodist Church. And we found the church here in Union. The church has been so helpful to us and we consider them as a family.

Other responses also had the same note of appreciation for their church membership. They testified how it is complicated to start a new life here, but the church has been their sanctuary and source of strength and courage to overcome all trials.

I was not able to dwell much on this topic due to lack of time. I immediately proceeded and read the second passage which is Nehemiah 1:1-11. I explained to them the background and theme of the passage and proceeded with the first question: "What does the broken wall represent in Nehemiah story?" The participants engaged in a simultaneous response. They referred to economy, security, power and identity. I then applied the question in their situation and asked, "Using your interpretation of the 'broken wall' how will the wall in your country be rebuilt and what role should the

immigrants play in realizing this? Ade replied, “In Nigeria, there is not a lot of security. The middle class has been wiped out because of corruption. You have a lot of educated people who have no opportunities for progress.”

In simultaneous response, everyone apparently affirmed that what Ade mentioned is similar to the condition of the country from which they came. In this situation they noted that it is to be expected that for people to survive, they will look for opportunities abroad. I asked the final question: “Is going back to your own country part of your plan? Why or why not? What kind of ‘Nehemiah-ministry’ can you do or are presently doing to your homeland without totally going back?” Again everyone responded simultaneously and I was not able to understand them clearly. Furthermore, the discussion shifted to a lot of topics. I then decided to ask each one of them if they are planning to go back to their home country or not. All of them said they were intending to go home. Here are some of exemplary reasons:

Hunyo: Getting old in this country is tough. You live alone and the cost of living is too much.

Iba: If things will get better in Nigeria, we will definitely go back.

Lando: It is more practical to go back. With the cost of living here, your pension will not be sufficient.

All of them said they were intending to go home. After this discussion, I reiterated the follow-up question that inquires about the Nehemiah-ministry they are doing for people in their home country. Here are some of their answers:

Grasya: I used to give my tithes to my home church. But my husband and I had a discussion about why am I giving my tithes to my home church while I am being fed here spiritually.

Manj: Sharing some fruits that we get here from American—I mean income [everyone was laughing] in terms of food, clothing and money to friends and relatives.

Bobeth: send boxes full of things to friends and relatives. We do share to people back home financially.

Iba: I was remembering what Oba has done—my husband. What he has done in years back: he tries to sponsor some kids in schools. He got some organizations here to give him Bibles and then he took the Bibles back in churches in Nigeria.

I closed with some words of encouragement. I encouraged them that in spite of the difficulties that they have undergone, they have experienced the presence and help of God more powerfully. I have also encouraged them that their migration is God's purpose so that God can use them as instruments in helping people back home. Lastly, I emphasized that even Jesus Christ became a stranger in this world 2000 years ago and that he understands and helps us with the difficulties we are going through because he experienced migration himself.

Phone Interview with Abayomi  
Member of Group 2  
May 1, 2006 10:00 a.m.  
Duration: 5 minutes

I conducted a phone interview with Abayomi, a Liberian-American who is also a member of the United Methodist Church. Before coming to the United States, Abayomi was active in politics back in Liberia. I decided to interview Abayomi during the day of the nationwide rally called "A Day without Immigrants."

Researcher (R): Do you support today's "A Day without Immigrants" rally?

Abayomi (A): 100 percent—because the founding year of this country was created by immigrants. The only natives here are the Native Indians. Many people in this society have forgotten their history. This is a way of a history lesson.

R: What do you think is the intention behind the proposal of criminalizing illegal immigrants?

A: Economic. Basically, lawmakers believe that immigrants are taking jobs from Americans. And they don't want that. Let me put it this way. A generation ago, it was the African-Americans who were the target of oppression. Now it is the immigrants.

Phone Interview with Ariel

Member of Group 1

July 5, 2006

Duration: 10 minutes (8:00-8:10 p.m.)

Researcher (R): What is unique about the Filipino church?

Ariel (A): Most of the time, an Anglo church worship style is stiff. Unlike Filipino worship style, *halimbawa meron tayong* [for example we have] testimony time. *Duon sa FFAUMC, meron tayong ganon. At palagay ko duon din natututo yung mga miembro natin maging witness* [In FFAUMC, we have something like that. And I think that through those testimonies members are learning how to be a witness].

R: How about in other types of church activities?

A: *Ah, marami tayong fellowship. At sa fellowship meron palaging kainan. Halimbawa, pagkatapos ng worship, meron kaming kainan. In fact, meron na kami ngayong food committee* [We have many fellowship. And in our fellowship, there is always a time to eat. For example, after worship, we have eating-time. And in fact, we now have a food committee]. *Malaki din ang naitutulong dahil higit kasi kaming nagiging-close sa isat-isa. Kaya kahit yung mga anak namin, inaanak ng mga kaibigan namin sa church* [It helps a lot because we get closer to one another. Even our children, they are godchildren of our friends in the church].

R: Among the biblical characters, to whom could you best relate your diaspora life?

A: *Si Joseph. Hanggang sa huling bahagi ng buhay niya, hindi niya naiintindihan kung ano ang purpose ng Dios a kanya. Ganoon ako. Hindi ko naiintindihan kung bakit ako nandito nuon. But through the years, nalaman ko na dahil nga narito ako, nakakakatulong na ko sa pamilya ko sa Pilipinas* [Joseph. Even at the last part of his life he did not understand God's purpose for his life. Just like me before, I didn't understand why I was here. But through the years, I understand that I am here so that I could help my family back in the Philippines]. *At malaki ang naitulong ng*

church *para magkaroon ng tamang direksyon ang isang immigrant na katulad ko* [And the church helps a lot for an immigrant like me to continue in the right direction].

Phone Interview with Puno

Member of Group 1

July 12, 2006

Duration: 15 minutes (10:00-10:15 p.m.)

Puno is the current pastor of First-Filipino American United Methodist Church.

Puno was also part of the focus group sessions.

Researcher (R): Do you find any cultural traits or perspectives which are offending in this society?

Puno (P): *Walang pag-respeto. Kasi dito puede kang tawagin sa first name mo. Saka sa lenguahe natin kasi laging kakabit ang po sa bawat salita* as a sign of respect [No respect. Because here, you can be called by your first name. And in our language we always put the po in every sentence as a sign of respect].

R: What are the differences between the church here and the church in the Philippines?

P: *Mas marami tayong activites sa Pilipinas. Dito kasi hindi natin magawa dahil busy lagi ang mga tao dahil sa trabaho* [We have more activities in the Philippines. Because here, we can't do it because everyone is busy with their jobs].

R: How about between the Filipino congregation and the Anglo congregation?

P: Testimony—*pagshare ng kanilang karanasan sa Panginoon sa panahon ng pagsamba* [Testimony—they share their experiences with the Lord during worship]. *Minsan sila ay nagbibigay ng testimonyo ayon sa narinig nila sa mensahe. Saka dito pagkatapos ng pastoral prayer, meron tayong laying of hands* [Sometimes they give testimony as a response to the message they heard. And here, after the pastoral prayer, we have the laying on of hands].

R: How about in other church activities?

P: *Meron tayong prayer chain tuwing alas-otso ng gabi. Itong tradisyon na ito galing sa Pilipinas* [We have a prayer chain every 8 o'clock in the evening. This tradition came from the Philippines].

R: What spiritual practice did you develop in your diaspora life?

P: *Ang maging mapanalanginin* [To be prayerful].

R: Which among God's characteristics did you mostly experience in diaspora life?

P: My life verse is, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." *Ang Dios ay mapagkakatiwalaang tunay* [God is trustworthy indeed].

R: What advice do you give to new immigrants?

P: *Ang magtiwala sila sa Dios. Saka na ako ay makatulong din sa kanila. Na kung kailangan nila ng matutuluyan na makatuloy sila sa bahay. At maipanalangin sila... ang isa na ay sa pamamagitan ng aking telephone ministry* [That they should trust in God. That I may also help them; that if ever they need a place to stay, they can stay in my place; and also that I may pray for them. One of the ways is through my telephone ministry].

Phone Interview with Doug

September 2, 2006

Duration: 15 minutes (4:00-4:15 p.m.)

Douglas Reeves is a member of the United Methodist Church in Union and is the current Board of Trustees Chairperson. Douglas witnessed the dramatic change of racial composition in their membership. He is an Anglo and is one of the advocates of racial diversity in their church.

Researcher (R): Do you think a church located in a multiethnic community should reflect the diversity of its community and be a multiethnic church?

Doug (D): Absolutely. That is an indication that the church is being relevant to the town. And if a newly moved-in person goes to church, the church should be a reflection of what the town is.

R: What do you think is the hardest obstacle in making that transition?

D: It is basically because of the old timers. It is really hard for them to change. They are used of being a traditional congregation. Something different for them is scary. But there was nothing to be scared about. Because people of other culture—they have many things that can be of great value to us. That is what happened to our church. We started to be open for change.

R: So far, have you encountered any thing offending from another culture?

D: No. Not that I can think of.

R: What can you advise to a new immigrant?

D: Join our church! Our church is diverse and people can meet different personalities. Our church is also a good way on how to start to have networks like the location of the nearest grocery. New people can also assimilate well to the town if they join our church because our church is a reflection of our town.

R: I have heard that you are starting to learn Tagalog words. What motivated you in learning the basic greeting of words in Tagalog?

D: So that I could feel comfortable with you and the rest of our Filipino church members.

R: What is the most interesting culture in Filipinos?

D: Family ties. The closeness of the family is just something so excellent. Secondly, the way Filipinos support their families and friends back home. The connection is just so strong.

Personal Interview: Enong

Member of Group 1

Date: June 27, 2006

Venue: The interviewee's residence

Duration: 1 hour (10:30-11:30 a.m.)

Researcher (R): Did you ever feel discrimination?

Enong (E): *Merong. Pero hindi na kasing dalas kaysa noon. Kasi dumadami na mga immigrants. Hindi na masyadong superior ang tingin nila sa sarili nila* [Yes, there is. But not that often unlike before. Because immigrants are growing in numbers. They don't see themselves anymore as superior].

R: What was your reaction?

E: I have adapted myself. I have learned to be strong and hardworking and determined. Because here, life is fast-track.

R: From 1-10, 10 being the highest, how do you rate Filipinos' communal life here in this area?

E: 6. *Maraming* division. *Lalo na sa larangan ng politika* [There are many divisions. Most of all in the area of politics].

R: Aside from what you just mentioned, what other negative Filipino traits are weakening the Filipino community here?

E: *Inggitan*; crab mentality, *siraan*, *minsan hinuhukay ang iyong nakaraan* [Jealousy, crab mentality, backbiting. Sometimes they are digging your past].

R: What are the positive traits that strengthen the Filipino community here?

E: Tradition, belief in God and *bayanihan* [helping one another] spirit.

R: How did religion play a role in your decision to migrate?

E: *Kulang ang buhay kahit nararanasan mo ang pagunlad, dahil mahalaga ang buhay epiritual* [Life is lacking even if you experience progress, because spirituality is essential to life].

R: Among the biblical diaspora characters we have studied, to whom you can relate most with?

E: Daniel—*dahil sa kanyang pananampataya, katapatan at buhay panalangin* [Because of his faith, faithfulness and life of prayer].

R: Which among God's many characters have you mostly experienced as an immigrant?

E: God's love is equal. There is much inequality here sometimes.

R: What will you advise to a newly arrived immigrant?

E: *Sikap, tiwala, panalangin, determinasyon, at mga tunay na malalapitang kaibigan*. [Diligence, trust, prayer, determination and friends who you can really count on]. Like in church our ministry is helping others and we ask those we help to also help others in need.



Personal Interview: Isla

Member of Group 2

Date: July 7, 2006

Venue: 1060 Overlook Terrace, Union, NJ, 07083

Duration: 30 minutes (5:00-5:30 p.m.)

Researcher (R): Are there any ideologies, ethics, customs or sets of beliefs here in the U.S. that you find offensive?

Isla (I): Morality. *Mas gusto ko ang kultura natin. Saka wala silang respeto sa matanda* [I like our culture better. They do not respect the elderly]. I won't call my Father by his first name. But they do it.

R: Do you feel that the U.S. culture is more superior than the Filipino culture?

I: Americans are more superior when they act. But our values are much better. I am very proud that I was raised in the Philippines and I know our values—and they are good. Here if you cannot prove yourself, they will step on your toes. And I stood up to my plate. I am use to this because I think I am more westernized. Before I came here, I used to work with Americans—in the American Base in the Philippines.

R: What Filipino cultural trait or perspective do you want to keep?

I: In our culture, parents really imposed on their children to go to church. But here, they give priorities for their children to be an American kid. That's one thing I hate about their priorities. You see, 22 years ago ever since I was a kid, I grew up in church. My faith in God has strengthened me with my struggles. I am very proud of those people who helped me. An American missionary really made a difference in my life.

R: What will you advise to a newly arrived immigrant?

I: Pray a lot. It is also good to develop a good support system here in the U.S. And also, don't be embarrassed to ask questions. And also, be tough. You have to explain yourself to them sometimes. We Filipinos, we don't look at another person eye to eye. So sometimes they will undermine you. They think you are inferior and weak or dishonest. You have to really make a point to convey yourself.

Phone Interview with Joey Lagdameo  
 President, Filipino Political Organization  
 September 14, 2006  
 Duration: 15 minutes (5:00-5:15 p.m.)

Joey Lagdameo is the president of an association called Filipino Political Organization in Union New Jersey. Joey is very active in social and political matters and is passionate in placing Filipinos in political positions.

Researcher (R): How many years have you been here in the U.S?

Joey (J): 13 years.

R: From 1-10, how do you rate Filipinos' communal life here in Union?

J: 5. *Minsan kasi parang identified ang mga Filipino associations sa mga elites. Yun ang tendency. Isa pa ay regionalism. Minsan ay hati-hati—Visayas, Ilocano, Tagalog* [Sometimes Filipino associations are identified with the elites. That is the tendency. The other one is regionalism. Sometimes we are divided—Visayas, Ilocano, Tagalog].

R: Can you recall how the beginning of Filipino community was like here in Union?

J: *Kaunti pa lang noon. Union was a nice community to live. Tapos maraming nagbilihan ng bahay dito. Nuong mga taong 1992, maraming mga Pilipino sa Newark. Kaya nga nuong 1993 nag-organized ako ng tournament para sa mga Filipinos and later on tumulong ako sa pagtatag ng magandang samahan dito. Kaya nga natatag itong Filipino-Political Organization* [It was very few then... Then plenty of people bought houses here. It was 1992 when many Filipinos from Newark moved here. That is why in 1993, I organized a tournament for all Filipinos and later on I helped in building a strong relationship here. That is why the Filipino-Political Organization got started].

R: Do you think Filipinos are fairly given opportunity in politics?

J: *Sa tingin ko nabibigyan naman ng opportunity ang mga Pilipino* [I think Filipinos are given opportunities]. But politicians have very bad experiences with Filipinos. Filipinos are not united. Nobody believes us. That is why we experienced discrimination. We are not getting the proper respect and services as a community because we are not united. We can't get respect unless we act together. If we don't do this, nobody will do this for us. I feel very sad. Nobody seems to care.

R: *Ano ang maipapayo mo sa isang bagong dating?* [What will you advise a newly arrived immigrant?]

J: Join a Filipino organization like us. Then we can discuss with them problems that will rise up. We will listen. Because these new immigrants, they need people who will help them and they need people who will give them honest information.

R: What do you think Filipino churches should do to help immigrants?

J: *Kayong mga* religious leaders *malaki ang magagawa ninyo* (you religious leaders, you can do a lot). Because you are a model and perceived by many as a righteous person. People listen to you. I suggest, use that position to lead. Your words will reach further because people will follow you.

Personal Interview: Manj

Member of Group 2

Date: June 20, 2006

Venue: The United Methodist Church in Union, Pastor's Office

Duration: 1 hour (10-11 a.m.)

Manj is an active member of the United Methodist Church in Union. He is a realtor and a part-time schoolteacher. His wife and three children are also in the United States with him. Manj is also part of the first level sessions and has given significant contribution in the discussions.

Researcher (R): Are there any ideologies, ethics, customs or sets of beliefs here in the U.S. that are offensive to you?

Manj (M): Lawsuit. In the Philippines, we don't take politically correct words so seriously. If someone calls you black, crippled or homeless, it is no big deal. Here, *isang maling salita lang merong ng lawsuit* [Just one wrong word, and there is already a lawsuit].

R: Was there any perception that you changed due to the influence of this culture?

M: Frankness. *Dati, tahimik ako. Ngayon hindi puedeng tahimik lang. Kailangan dito strong ka* [Before, I was a quiet person. Now, you can't be silent here. Here you need to be strong].

R: In the Philippines, do you believe in the spirit world and other folk beliefs? If yes, did that change now? Why?

M: Folk Beliefs? *Hindi ako naniniwala pero nagiingat ako*. I am not crossing the line. *Nanatili pa rin sa akin yon kahit dito sa U.S. Kasi dito din naman merong sariling folk beliefs* [Folk beliefs? I don't believe them but I am careful! I am not crossing the line. Those beliefs remained in me even here in the U.S. Because here, there are also folk beliefs].

R: Do you feel that the U.S. culture is more superior to the Filipino culture?

M: Not Superior. *May kanya-kanyang strength. Halimbawa family ties sa atin matindi, dito hindi. Ang matatanda dito nasa Home Care* [Not superior. They have their own strength. For example, the culture of family ties is our strength. But here, they bring their old folks to Home Care].

R: Why did you join a multiethnic church and not an all-Filipino church?

M: I don't care if it is multiethnic or Filipino. I can adjust both ways.

R: Do you sometimes feel like an outsider in this society?

M: Outsider? I don't feel an outsider. *Kasi iginagalang ko yung multiethnicity dito. Hindi lang naman isang type of people ang nandito* [I respect the multiethnicity here. There is no one-type of people here].

R: From 1-10, 10 being the highest, how do you rate Filipinos' communal life in the area?

M: Communal life?—5! *Ang mga Filipinos dito, kasi crab mentality pa rin* [because Filipinos here still have crab mentality]. As you go up, someone will pull you down. And if you are not part of their region, you are not in. *Pero* positively speaking, *yang* gossip, *nasa* society *natin* *iyon*. *Yun yata ang nagapapasaya sa atin. Kapag wala non malungkot! Saka yan minsan ang form of communication natin* [But positively speaking, gossip is already part of our society. I think that is what makes us happy. If there is nothing like that, it is sad. And that is like a form of communication for us].

R: Do you think it is a sin to forget one's original culture?

M: I don't think so. *Kung nakita ng Panginoon na nagiba ka ng kultura ng higit na maganda, eh sa tinging ko matutuwa ang Panginoon doon* [If the Lord saw that you changed your cultural ways for the better, I think the Lord will be pleased].

R: Do you pray in Tagalog or in English?

M: *Sa Tagalog, kasi mas naex-express ko yung gusto kong sabihin saka mas personal* [Tagalog. Because I can express what I wanted to say and it is more personal].

R: What can the Filipino church contribute to the American church?

M: *Yung passion sa evangelism. Dito kasi parang wala. Saka, yung mga inter-church fellowship* [Passion for evangelism. Here, as if there is none. And also inter-church fellowship].

R: Which among God's many characters have you mostly experienced as an immigrant?

M: I think that God is caring and loving.

R: What religious beliefs have strengthened you as an immigrant?

M: Submission to God's will. When you submit your will to his will, all goes well. But I know that is hard.

Group Interview: Page Family  
Members of Group 1  
Date: September 23, 2006  
Venue: Page Family Residence  
Duration: 40 minutes (5:30-6:10 p.m.)

The Page Family is very active in First Filipino American United Methodist Church. Before I started, I asked the children if they could understand me if I speak in *Tagalog*. May, the older child said, "Probably *Tag-lish* (*Tagalog* English)." Caitlyn, the younger responded, "Only English." So I decided to do the whole interview in English. I explained to them the nature, goal, and theme of my study and related it with the purpose of the interview. Following are the highlights of the interview.

Researcher (R): How long have you been here in the U.S?

Kay (K): It was 1991 when my husband [Ener] and I arrived. My children followed 7 months after.

R to May: How old were you then?

May (M): I was 7 years old.

R: What was your feeling back then—coming from another country and having another culture?

M: I was a little scared. I was 7 years old so I did not really remember a lot. But I did not really understand the language and how the kids interacted with one another. I actually went to ESL to actually learn English. I experienced a little bit of culture shock.

R: What Filipino culture do you want to impart to your children?

K: Respect. Like for example, I do not want them to call me Kay—like kids here. I find that culture very offensive. They should call me mom.

R: Let me go back to the kids. Have you ever felt confusion of whether you are Filipino or American?

M: I consider myself more Filipino than American. Not as much as an American. Because 7 years I was raised in the Philippines and my parents always taught me Filipino ways. I guess its just language that I got from America. I consider myself an American but more Filipino than American.

R: What was your experience in going back to the Philippines?

Caitlyn (C): I feel excited seeing my relatives and cousins.

R: When someone asks you, are you Filipino or are you American, what do you tell them? Do you tell them you're from the Philippines?

C: I am both. I know some Tagalog words also. Sometimes, I try to figure out when my mom talks in Tagalog. *Magandang umaga* [goodmorning], *salamat po* [thank you], *magandang gabi* [goodevening].

R: Do you sometimes experience a culture gap between you the parents and you children?

K: They go out of the house without telling me. Kasi dito sa America, labas na lang ng labas anytime. *Sa Pilipinas kailangan magpaalam. Saka may curfew.* I was brought up like that. *Sa akin mahirap i-give up yung gawi na yon* (Because here in America, one can go out anytime. In the Philippines, you need to ask permission. And there is a curfew. I was brought up like that. For me, that is hard to give up).

M: Culture gap? Not that much. I don't think so. I compared it with my friends' family and my family. I think in our family, we're closer. That generation gap is not much of a complication for me. All of us, I guess we have been accustomed to living here now. So, we get their jokes and they get our jokes sometimes. Our slang, they get sometimes now. Because you know the generation gap is like language too. We kind of like learn from each other. Even though sometimes we don't get it the first time. As time goes on, we do. I try to say bye too when I leave. I know that some of my brothers leave without saying. But I try to do that Filipino expectation of being a child.

Ener: *Ako yung kultura na pagdating ng 18 independent na* [For me, the culture that when you reached 18, you are already independent]. Some teenagers' here in the States, they move. *Mahirap para sa amin* [That is hard for us]. There was a time that my children insist on being independent. It is hard because we still want to protect them. But later on they obeyed to what we want.

Researcher to all: Choose among the three.

- a. I am a Filipino
- b. I am a Filipino American
- c. I am an American-Filipino

The parents and the children all responded that they are Filipino Americans. They emphasized that they are more Filipino than American. I ended the interview at 6:10 p.m.

### The Initial Categorization

The presentation of this section is already summarized and is already in coded arrangement. Unlike the complete account, the presentation of this information is not in chronological narration. During the observation, I have been conscious of issues that pertain to categories I have made, and I have jotted down information according to these same categories. The information gathered at this level also served as foundational points for creating a diaspora contextual theology. The information gathered here was analyzed and interpreted on the second level and was used to established some of the main points of the contextual theology.

The presentation of this information is in two main categories: data from observation of culture and data from observation of Scriptures. Under data from the observation of culture are (1) cultural perspectives and (2) cultural traits. Under this category, I have identified cultural elements that are significantly shaped by the participants' migration experience. As compared to the participants' home culture, these characteristics exhibit their own uniqueness due to the whole process of migration. Data from the observation of Scripture are (3) cultural perspectives as hermeneutical lenses and (4) scriptural and theological themes. This information is also reflected in Figure 4 (see p. 56). Aside from the four main data, I have also observed two overarching themes that have emerged from both of the two main categories: postcolonial themes and themes on Philippine Methodism.

As explained earlier, two Bible study groups took part in the focus groups and interview sessions I conducted. The first is a Bible study group from The First Filipino American United Methodist Church in Jersey City, New Jersey; the second is a Bible study group of the United Methodist Church in Union—a multiethnic church in Union County, New Jersey. One of my aims was to make a comparative analysis between these two groups.

The elements and conditions that are common are evident with these two groups—both groups are active church members of Methodist churches and both are communities of immigrants. The point of contrast that served as an overarching principle and guided my analysis is that the first group is part of an all-Filipino congregation while the second is part of a multiethnic church. As explained earlier, the guiding line throughout this research is the cultural problem of identity. Comparing these two groups,



I found some significant theoretical distinctions that are relevant to the problem of identity in diaspora life.

### The All-Filipino Group

Laughter from Kay's home could heard from where I parked my car. Some of the research participants were already gathered. Their children were outside the house playing basketball. As I got near them, they greeted me in a flawless New Jersey accent.

They sounded like any ordinary American teenagers, yet their looks and skin color shows otherwise. As I entered the house, I was warmly greeted by the people and the delectable food on the table. One can easily say that this event is a Filipino gathering. As others arrived, the hostess decided to start with the meal. Most did not hesitate to eat in the Filipino way—*kamayan* (eating with hands). As everyone was enjoying the food, I noticed that some talked to one another in a regional dialect that I did not quite understand. This action introduced me to an important characteristic of the group: that even if all the participants are Filipinos, there is still regional diversity among them.

The group met in the house of the Bible study leader twice. I adjusted the four-meeting study lessons I prepared into two meetings in consideration of the church's already full calendar. We did use all four lessons discussing two lessons per meeting. This group has 14 participants. Their profile is in Appendix A.

The group met for approximately three hours per session on two Saturday nights. From 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., the group had their fellowship over a light meal that the host had prepared. This fellowship hour is included in my observation because cultural elements are expressed not just in the cognitive and psycho-spiritual interaction during the study

but also in the physical facets—cases such as preferred seating arrangement, posted announcement, food, and musical preference.

The actual Bible study took place from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Enthusiasm, interest, and a good amount of interaction was evident during the study. Almost everyone expressed their pleasure for being part of a study that was specifically focused on their life as immigrants. Some even expressed amazement in learning that migration is a significant feature in the Scriptures. The running record of my observation covers the full duration of the Bible Study session and the fellowship hour preceding. The full transcript of this session is the previous section, *The Chronological Account*.

#### Cultural perspectives

The first set of data includes cultural perspectives that have been developed as a result of their migration experience. Here, I took note of data that appears to be forms of a belief system, ideologies, or points of view about truth. In contrast with cultural traits, which mainly deal with tangible actions or practices, cultural perspectives deal mainly with the cognitive and emotional aspects.

One of the reflections we did while we were studying the topic preservation versus assimilation is the positive perspective of seeing *two homes and two cultures* as opposed to having a feeling of homelessness. As explained earlier, *home* is developed in this study as a metaphor used to refer to the participants' homeland and unique cultural traits or perspectives that they brought in their diaspora life from their homeland.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The term home is translated in *Tagalog* as *tahanan*. *Tahanan* refers to a dwelling place where a family resides. It is sometimes rendered differently from *bahay* (house), which is the physical structure of a *tahanan*. *Tahanan* is that relational and emotional haven built by the love of family members. In short, *tahanan* is home while *bahay* is translated as house. Home to Filipinos also means *bayan* or homeland or country. This is especially true to Filipino immigrants. When a Filipino immigrant is planning to go back to the Philippines he or she will say, "*Uuwi ako* [I will go home]." This sentence always carries the

Homelessness is a psychological crisis experienced by many immigrants who are unable to handle the difficulties embedded in leaving the homeland and adapting to a new home. They eventually feel homeless—not having either. A worldview of two homes is a positive response to this difficulty. They have preserved their homeland culture, identity, and memories while assimilating to the culture, identity and memory of the host land. Ariel comments, “*Isang pribalehiyo na magkaroon ng dalawang culture* [It is a privilege to have two cultures]” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006). It expresses that developing a two-home worldview during migration is an effective remedy to identity crisis.

Another theme that has emerged is *spirituality*. The participants agree that being in diaspora rekindles one’s spirituality. Difficulties entailed in migration such as family separation, identity crisis, and racism, are factors that inspire an immigrant to seek spiritual answers and a spiritual community. Kay, in narrating how difficulties in diaspora life lead people to seek God remarks, “*Wala kang kamaganak, mayroon kang mga kakilala hindi mo naman sila kaibigan. Iiba ang pagkain; iba ang salita; iba ang lugar; iba ang way of life nila. Saan ka lalapit?* [You don’t have relatives, you know some people but they are not your friends. The food is different; the language is different; the places are different; the way of life is different. Where will you go?]” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006). Ariel supported this

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connotation of home even though the word *tahanan* is not literally used. Furthermore, it generally does not refer to one’s *bahay* (house) but one’s *bayan* (country). In local settings, *bayan* is also commonly used to refer to one’s town or province. Thus the term homeland precisely reflects the Filipinos concept of *tahanan*. It refers to a place of origin, familiarity, culture and relationship whether it is the house, town, province or country. The way Filipinos value communal living makes the concept of home also applicable outside of one’s house to one’s town, province or nation. Thus, the whole nation can be called the immigrants’ home. It can also be implied that one can bring one’s home outside of one’s country when referring to one’s culture.

thought saying, “*Para kang nasa wilderness experience pagnandito ka; ... kaya nagiging espirtual ang mga tao* [You are like in a wilderness experience when you are here;... that is why people get spiritual]” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006). The group is in agreement that a deep sense of spiritual worldview helps an immigrant to see a God who not only cares for the diaspora people but is with them in the experience. In a separate personal interview I conducted with Enong, he explains, “*Kulang ang buhay kahit nararanasan mo ang pagunlad dahil mahalaga ang buhay* spiritual [Life is lacking even if you experience progress because spirituality is important to life]” (Enong, Interview, 2006).

#### Cultural traits

While the information gathered on the perspective category focused on the cognitive, the information in this section is more pragmatic. Some of the data here is related to the previous data due to how actions and practices are deeply rooted in how one views reality. Thus, aside from actions that took place during the sessions, I included those that have been narrated as part of their diaspora way of life but were not necessarily exhibited during the meetings.

One cultural trait evident with this community is a Filipino social behavior called *damayan* (sharing). *Damayan* or sharing is a survival value many times developed among poor communities in the Philippines. Economic struggles teach people to understand and extend concern to people of the same economic condition.

In the context of migration, *damayan* is developed in a more profound way. *Damayan* goes beyond the barriers of economic status, regional origin, political stance, and religious affiliation. *Damayan* ignores these various social barriers that divided

people in their homeland and welcome the immigrant as a beloved *kababayan* (fellow Filipino). The participants gave witness on how the same migration struggles inspire them to reach out and offer help to new arrivals. Many testified that they have developed a *damayan* attitude because of the same *damayan* other Filipinos showed them when they were also new in the United States. One couple has emphasized that *damayan* has been their way of life for a long time and that they consider it as a form of personal ministry and evangelism (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006). Although *damayan* is not a particular program in their church, through their own individual initiative, they have reached out to many Filipino immigrants and, through this attitude, they have brought some to their church gatherings.

Another lifestyle developed in diaspora life is the need to belong to a spiritual community. If in their homeland some people do not find church life as an essential, in diaspora the struggles they face compel them to seek for a support group that will help them along the way. Considering Filipinos' religious background, in most cases, Filipino immigrants will find a church. Some of the participants narrated how each of them found a spiritual haven when they joined their church. Some recount how finding a church was their main concern even during the first few days of their arrival.

An example of a negative cultural attitude in the Philippines is regionalism. Sadly, regionalism in some parts of the country still exists and is used as a tool by some cultural groups to degrade marginal groups in an effort to acclaim one's alleged superiority. When asked if this social attitude is still carried here in diaspora life, two opposing views emerged from the group. Some say Filipinos leave regionalism in their homeland. Ariel argues, "*Dahil dito, ikaw ay minority na, ang pinaka-major commonality na ay ikaw ay*

*Pilipino. Kapag ikaw ay Pilipino kasama na kita* [Because here you are a minority, your major commonality is you are a Filipino. If you are a Filipino, you are with me]” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006). The other view upholds that forms of regionalism are carried in diaspora life. Kay asserts, “If you join a group that is all Filipino, that [regionalism] comes out. But if you [a Filipino] mingle with other races, you stand as one—Filipinos—no matter what region you came from” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006). In other words, in a society where one is a minority, the presence of a dominant culture in diaspora life helps Filipino immigrants rediscover their shared identity and eventually solidify their community—something that is hard to do in their homeland where people are divided by regions and subcultures. Later on, a majority of the participants agree with Kay. The participants also affirm how destructive regionalism is in diaspora life.

In another topic, when I asked the group what one cultural trait or perspective do they want to keep and pass on to their children, almost all of them said, “Respect for elderly” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006). This attitude is mainly a response to the lack of respect they observe most young people have for their parents and the elderly. The group expressed the shock of seeing disrespect among young people in this society. Later on in a group interview I conducted with the Page family, when asked what aspect of Filipino culture have they insisted on imparting to their kids, Kay responded, “Respect. I don’t ever want to hear them call me Kay.... I find that attitude very offensive” (Group Interview, Page Family, September 23, 2006). Arguing along this line, in a personal interview with Puno, when I asked what cultural trait or perspective in Western society has been offending to him, he said,

“*Walang pag-respeto. Kasi dito puede kang tawagin sa first name mo. Saka sa atin kasi laging kakabit ang po sa bawat salita* [No respect. Because here, you can be called in your first name. And in our (language) we always put the *po*<sup>18</sup> in every sentence]” (Puno, Phone Interview, 2006).

Respect for the elderly is also evident in how their young people go to church with them religiously on Sundays. Going to church for these Filipino parents is not an option but an obligation that their children must observe. Consequently, in this church and in most Filipino churches I have seen, they always have an active youth group.

Related to theme respect is the cultural practice of *close family ties*. This topic was brought up during the group interview sessions I made with the Page Family. When asked if they experienced any form of generation gap between them, Ener, the father of the house, said, “*Ang culture dito, pagdating mo ng 18, you have to go. It is hard to let go. Teenagers here in the States, they moved. Mahirap para sa amin iyon* [The culture here is when you reach 18, you have to go. It is hard to let go. Teenagers here in the States... they moved. That is hard for us]” (Group Interview, Page Family, September 23, 2006). They narrated that at first their children insisted that they should separate and be independent. After a long period of dialogue, their children finally conceded and decided to obey their parents. Currently, even if three of their children are in their 20s, they are still in living with their parents.

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<sup>18</sup> The use of *po* or *opo* is a commonly known expression of respect for elders in *Tagalog* culture.

## Cultural perspectives as hermeneutical lenses

The third set of information I observed are perspectives used as hermeneutical lenses in reading the Scriptures. In this section, I took note of ways that cultural perspectives were used as tools in approaching biblical passages.

In the previous section, I discussed how the participants perceive that in migration the experience of having two homes is a privilege—their homeland and the host land. This attitude is opposed to a diaspora crisis called homelessness. The two-home-worldview is a balanced attitude of assimilating to the host culture without negating their home culture, thus by metaphor, having a twofold home. This positive attitude helps them in identifying expressions of the same behavior in diaspora narratives in the Scriptures. For example, they were able to read the Book of Daniel as a narrative of a diaspora community faithful to their identity, while respectful of the laws of the their new place of residence. Readers who feel a sense of homelessness may see more of the struggles, conflicts, and sadness in the Book of Daniel rather than the exhibition of faithful stability and wise adaptability in diaspora crises. The participants were able to comprehend and connect to the biblical characters' resolve to adapt to their new home without forgetting their homeland because they themselves have experienced a two-home worldview.

The participants also used personal stories as a tool for approaching the Scriptures. They not only study the biblical stories; they allow their diaspora experiences to interact with the diaspora biblical characters. They used their experiences as a source of wisdom in shedding light to the diaspora passages. Without their stories, their reading will not be as meaningful and exciting. Many of them were amazed by the fact that the



Scriptures reflect their experiences and can provide significant answers and encouragement pertinent to their diaspora concerns.

#### Scriptural and theological points

The fourth theme that emerged from the analysis is important theological and scriptural points formed prior and during the study. Presented here are themes that carry significant theological insights. They reflect how theology is deeply embedded in the way of life of Filipino immigrants.

One of the themes that emerged during the discussion is the *providence of God*. The participants brought up a couple of times how God provided opportunities for them to come to the United States. Furthermore, they recognized a God who goes with them even beyond the boundaries of their homeland. This perspective strengthens the immigrants to face their struggles courageously knowing that God not only favors them but is with them in all their diaspora struggles. Most of them also expressed that they see their migration as part of God's purpose. It was emphasized by some that this divine purpose is not focused on one's economic success alone but in God's larger agenda of reaching out to other Filipino immigrants and helping people financially back in their homeland through their *padala* (financial support). Contributing to the discussion of God's purpose, Ada points out that for her it is to care for her loved ones and home church:

To share whatever I am receiving here. *Hindi lang sa mga kamaganak kundi yung mga senior citizen sa church namin*. The fact *na binigyan ako na Panginoon ng pagkakataon na mapunta dito na hindi naman binigay sa marami, yung ang aking purpose—to share* [To share whatever I am receiving here—not only with my relatives but to the senior citizens of my (home) church. The fact that God has given me the opportunity to go here and not to others—that is my purpose, to share] (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006)

Pointing out God's intended mission for Filipino-Christian immigrants, Enong points out, "We serve as the bridge *para yung mga darating dito ay hindi mapapariwara. Pero kung nagaguide natin sila hindi sila mawawalan ng pagasa* [We serve as the bridge so that those who come here will not go astray. If we can guide them, they will have hope]" (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006).

Knowing and being faithful to their mission helps them to cultivate a meaningful life in diaspora. Climbing this society's success ladder is not their first priority anymore because they have a more important mission to carry out. Ener asserts:

*Ang ating pagpunta dito ay kagagawan lahat ng Dios. Dinala niya tayo para makapagdala ng magandang balita, lalo na sa kapwa natin Pilipino. Hindi by chance ang pagpunta namin dito... Ginagamit tayo ng Dios dito bilang diaspora Filipinos* (Our migration here is all part of God's plan. God brought us here so that we can bring the good news, most especially to Filipinos like us. It is not by chance that we are here. God is using us as diaspora Filipinos). (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006)

Related to this thought, *evangelism* also emerged as an issue of profound theological relevance. During the study sessions and personal interviews, they frequently referenced the fact that they are part of a church that reaches out to Filipino immigrants who are in need. Some expressed how they have only discovered their mission as immigrants when they became part of a church that cares for people like them. In essence, they see the need to help Filipino immigrants through the church and not just as individuals. They could not see themselves as able to help Filipino immigrants if they are disconnected from the church. A Filipino diaspora church for them is not just a spiritual community but a mission agent that should usher change, comfort and aid for Filipino immigrants. Ariel states, "*May purpose ang Paginoon kaya na-form yung church natin. Kaya nandon tayo.*

*Kaya nandoon ka*, Lita [God has a purpose why our church has been formed. That is why we are there. That is why you are there, Lita]” (The Diaspora People and the Gospel, 2006). Lita responded saying, “*Kaya nga may sagot ako doon: yung boldness and eagerness to share the gospel* [That is why I have an answer to that: the boldness and eagerness to share the gospel]” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006).

#### Postcolonial theme

I also conducted the analysis through the lens of postcolonialism. Gathered in this section are themes specifically associated with postcolonial thoughts, sentiments, and experiences. Noted here are economic, political, and social issues that assess systemic structures that are perceived by the group as oppressive to the condition of immigrants. By studying scriptural passages that connect diaspora experiences with colonial domination, the group sees themselves in the lives of biblical diaspora characters and finds valuable insights for responding to forces that discount the concerns of diaspora communities like them. The Bible study questionnaire has particular questions that I have used to guide participants in reflecting on postcolonial themes.

One example is studying the Genesis account of how Jacob and his family got the same job occupation in Egypt—shepherding (47:6) while other refugees were treated as slaves (47:21). The first question was, “Do you see this as a similar depiction of current immigrants here in the U.S.—some are treated well, some are not?”

The few that responded were unanimous in saying, “Yes.” Ariel narrated that the reason why he was turned down for a job application was because of his skin color. He then concluded, “If you are applying for a job position, even if your credential is better

than another immigrant, if they see your color, they will make the preference for a white immigrant” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006).

This discussion brought me to the next set of questions. “Why were Jacob and his clan assigned to settle in Goshen? (47:33). Applying this story to our present context, do Filipino immigrants practice their profession here in the U.S.? If not, how do you feel about it?” This question brought up many reactions. Basically, the group is unanimous in assessing that Filipino immigrants, in particular, and other groups of immigrants in general, are not able to practice their own profession when they come to the United States. During the course of the discussion, some expressed their respect for immigration policies while others expressed their disappointments. Kay, in response to Enong’s comment that immigrants are second-class citizens, stressed, “*Meron talagang privilege differences between citizens and immigrants. Sa tingin ko okey lang ito dahil ito and batas dito* [There is indeed privilege differences between citizens and immigrants. But I think this is just fine because it is the law]” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006).

On the other hand, Greg, in total disappointment, narrated how he failed to find a decent job because of him being an immigrant. He explains, “*Pagdating ko dito na-culture-shock ako. Sa Pilipinas ako ang boss, dito ako ang busabos* [When I got here, I was culture-shocked. In the Philippines, I was the boss, while here I am the ill-treated slave] (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006).

Enong sees the problem as leaning more to the immigrants’ own fault. He remarks, “Many Filipinos will come here as tourists, then they will take the risk of

staying illegally and then take a meager job as an act of desperation” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006). At any rate, the group was in agreement in hoping for a better occupational condition for the Filipino immigrants in the United States.

### Philippine Methodism

Noted here are themes that are significantly related to the fact that the participants are not only United Methodist members in the United States., but that most of them were United Methodists even before they immigrated. Looking at it very closely, Filipino United Methodists in diaspora reflect a unique and long history of identity concerns from the movement’s birth in the Philippines to its flight back to the land of the Methodist missionaries who first brought the gospel to the islands. Though many issues have emerged, I have limited my observation to issues that are related to their migration experience.

A United Methodist feature that was brought up for discussion is

*connectionalism*.<sup>19</sup> Ada recognized its value for Filipino immigrants:

*Ang lagi kong sinasabi sa mga anak ko, kahit saan kayo mapuntang lugar, ang unang-unang gagawin ninyo ay maghanap ng isang Methodist Church, at magpakilala kayo. At malaki ang maitutulong ng mga pastor sa Pilipinas dito. Kung alam nila na may meimbro na pupunta sa abroad, dapat sabihin nila na pumunta sa Methodist church. Basta Methodist kahit hindi Filipino Methodist church [I always say to my children, wherever you go, always look for a Methodist church and introduced yourself as a Methodist in the Philippines. And pastors can help a lot with this. If they know that they have a church member that will go abroad, they should advise their parishioners to look for a Methodist church, as*

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<sup>19</sup> The *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church (UMC) describes connectionalism as “multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference after another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.” The *Book of Discipline* of the UMC further gives this statement: “We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith ... by sharing together a constitutional polity,... by sharing a common mission,... by sharing a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things” (Olson 2004:130).

long as it is Methodist, even if it is not a Filipino Methodist]. (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006)

Other participants supported this insight and expressed appreciation for how connectionalism in the United Methodist Church brought them to their current church. Most of them were already Methodists back in the Philippines and one of the first things they did when they first arrived was to find a UMC church in the area. Being connectional, the participants narrated how easy it is for them to feel comfortable in a Filipino Methodist church. A friendly and familiar spiritual community is a great help to new immigrants. Familiarity includes the worship service style. Many Protestant churches, including the Methodist church, were introduced by American missionaries. Generally, the worship pattern in Filipino Methodism is an adaptation of American Methodist worship. This familiarity is an important factor that helps Filipino Methodist immigrants feel connected to a spiritual community.

Furthermore, their church observes some worship traditions that are not found in the American church. For example, in most American churches, the minister presides over the whole worship service. In Filipino churches, including the first group's church, the minister only leads during prayers, benediction and sermon. The rest are led by lay people who are called liturgists. This lay-empowered setup is also evident in other areas of ministries. Furthermore, other Filipino cultural practices such as *pagdiriwang* (celebration) also manifests in various church activities: praise bands in worship services, plentiful food in fellowships, and cultural dances on special occasions.

Being an immigrant church that basically functions in two cultural ways, conflicts also exist. For example, their worship service is basically done in English, but in the reading of the Scriptures and in some parts of the sermon, they incorporate their native

language called *Tagalog*. This arrangement has pleased the adults but has dissatisfied the young people because most of the Filipino youth in their church do not understand *Tagalog* (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 11, 2006).

Another issue of conflict is between the desire to be inclusive in mission and evangelism as opposed to focusing only in reaching Filipinos. Some are eager to reach out even to non-Filipinos while most of them see greater advantage in focusing their outreach to Filipinos alone. Lita argues, “In an idealistic point of view, *napakaganda noon* [that is very beautiful]—that we spread the gospel multiculturally. But the success rate may not be as high as the success rate of getting people coming from the same culture as ours” (Focus Group, First Filipino American United Methodist Church March 25, 2006).

### The Multiethnic Group

The group is a Bible study group of the United Methodist Church in Union. Both the study group and the church, in general, have a multiethnic composition that includes a community of Filipinos in it. Most of the participants are Filipinos and others are immigrants from different cultural background. In these two sessions, I have limited the participants only to those who have experienced migration and excluded those who were born in the United States. To balance with the first group, I have also met with the second group twice and adjusted the four-meeting lessons I prepared and discussed two lessons per session. This group has 19 participants. Their profile is in Appendix A.

Colorful flags that represent the nationalities of the church members were hanging around the sanctuary of their church. Some of the people’s attire and elements within

their worship service also reflect the diversity of this small multiethnic Methodist congregation. After the worship service that Sunday, the research participants went directly to the parsonage where we held the first focus group session. In spite of the fact that they all came from diverse cultural background, each one enjoyed the Filipino dishes that I have prepared for them. During the meal fellowship, everyone conversed with one another in English. Even if some had a hard time speaking in English, they pushed themselves not to speak in their own native language so as not to offend anyone who would not understand. In fact, the habit of not speaking through one's native dialect during group meetings is a common practice in this church. If in certain occasions a person forgets this practice and speaks to someone in a native dialect, someone in the group will give a reminder to speak in English.

The group met for approximately two hours per session on two Sundays after the worship service. From 1:00 to 2:00 p.m., the group enjoyed a fellowship over lunch that I have prepared. Similar to the first group, this fellowship hour is included in my observation because I assume that cultural elements are expressed not just in the cognitive level through the group study but also in physical facets. The running record of my observation covered the full duration of the Bible study and the fellowship hour preceding.

Just like the presentation of the data in the first group, the data are separated into two parts: data from observation of culture and data from observation of Scriptures. Aside from these two main data, I was also conscious of two overarching themes of this study—postcolonialism and Methodism. Unlike the first group, my observation was not



focused on Philippine Methodism alone but Methodism in general and in the context of each of their cultural backgrounds.

### Cultural perspectives

The first set of data is cultural perspectives that developed as a result of migration. Most of the participants came from a background that values religion and *spirituality* entrenched in their cultural norms. In some parts of the discussion, the participants emphasized how this worldview was further enhanced when they came to the United States. Living in a society that values secularism, they explain how spirituality serves as a sanctuary from the unfamiliar and sometimes harassing principles of a secular culture.

Isla narrates how surprised she was when she heard the story of one of the church young people about an occasion when the teenager suggested to his teacher to say grace over the meal. According to him, the teacher responded, “You do that at home but you don’t do it here” (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). This incident may be less surprising to their non-immigrant church members, but to immigrants like them who were brought up in a society that values spirituality, this attitude is not easy to accept.

Jay came to the United States when he was 12. He is now an active youth member involved in various church ministries. Coming from a youth perspective, he narrates, “One of the hardest things is getting to be in the crowd. Because I look different and talk different they sometimes called me FOB, meaning *fresh off the boat*” [a derogatory phrase applied to foreigners] (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). With the question, “What native cultural traits, values, practices or beliefs

will you not forget?” He responded, “my faith and my religion.” This view of relating faith as a cultural norm can be seen positively. Having an immigrant perspective, it is a positive response to various struggles integrated in migration experience, especially threats of deconstructing one’s cultural identity. Iba, coming from a Nigerian culture points out, “My culture is connected to my religion;... it cannot be separated” (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006).

Another perspective that emerged during discussion is the one of pluralism or specifically, *multiethnicity*. Recognizing how the United States is rapidly becoming a pluralistic society, the participants expressed how they adapted a multicultural perspective in life, including their choice of a spiritual community. Basically, the overarching reason why the participants joined Union UMC is because of its multicultural facet. Most of them could not see the point of joining a remote monocultural community that is ironically located in a society that upholds a lifestyle of diversity and discovery of the *other*. Jay emphasizes, “Our church reflects our community” (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). Freedom emphatically asserts, “If I want a Guyanan church, I would have stayed in Guyana” (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). In other aspects, diversity is also reflected in the church’s leadership role, ministry involvement and small group composition. For example, they try to avoid having all-Asian or all-African group meetings where others may feel excluded. If ever a certain ethnic heritage ever were emphasized, the event was always open for everyone.

## Cultural traits

As explained previously, the participants adopted a worldview of multiethnicity, which is expressed in various behavior, practices, and lifestyle. Some of these were evident during the actual session. When asked to name something unique about their culture, everyone showed much respect and keen interest in each other's presentation. They expressed enthusiasm to learn and to experience the cultural differences of everyone else during the study, and this curiosity is evident in many avenues in their church life. For example, they have activities where they celebrate their multiethnicity through songs, dances, musical presentations and other cultural forms of worship. Some also pointed out that their preference for a multicultural community was also a response of disappointment in a faith community of their own cultural background. Iba initiated this point, saying, "Sadly, in a Nigerian church, they bring the negatives of our culture" (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). Ernaldo supported this argument saying, "When we were in a Filipino church, some of the bad cultural traits in our country were brought in" (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). Others in the group strengthened this point by narrating their own stories.

Another diaspora-developed attitude that emerged as a topic for discussion is the participants' commitment to *preserve their good cultural values*. This attitude reflects their admiration and gratitude for their own culture. Later on, in my personal interview with one of the participants, Manj made an amendment to this premise that they should emphasize that the beliefs and values immigrants should preserve are the good aspects of their culture only. He then explained how destructive it is for Filipino immigrant

communities to keep some of the bad relational aspects of the culture of Filipinos.

(Interview, Manj, June 20, 2006)

In some cases, this attitude is a response to some cultural traits in the U.S that they found both disappointing and hurting. For example, when asked to identify one native cultural trait or perspective that they intend to keep, almost all of them talked about *respect for elderly*. I let the discussion flow in this direction because I observed that the group was so concerned about this matter. Iba, pointing out that media and other elements of society are producing impolite children, says, “In Nigeria, the village raises the child. Here, it is your lone voice in the midst of a wilderness” (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). The group agrees with Iba and some expressed both fear and disappointment. Freedom took the discussion higher and gave motivating insight, saying,

We as parents can still make something to happen in that child by directing how to conduct himself despite of all that is happening around him. That is where our spiritual background comes in. That is our God-given role as parents. (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006)

This topic ended with the reflection that they as immigrants will not only survive but will make a difference in the social make up of their host country.

In studying the life and mission of Nehemiah, the participants brought up one more cultural trait. Seeing the similarity of Nehemiah’s commitment to Jerusalem and their strong *connection* with their homeland, each shared how they engage in a Nehemiah-like ministry by sending help to their homeland, specifically to immediate family, relatives, and home church. Help ranges from money, clothing and scholarships to Bibles. Like the broken wall of Jerusalem, they also reflected on the national condition of their individual

homelands discussing poverty, politics, morality, war, and disease. The broken wall in their homeland is far from being fixed, but they all agree that in big and small ways, immigrants can play a significant role in rebuilding those walls (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 9, 2006).

In two of the interviews I conducted, the subject of *toughness* was raised. Isla said, “I have learned to be tough. Here if you cannot prove yourself, they will step on your toes. And I stood up.” She then gave an example of how the Filipinos’ attitude of *hiya* can be interpreted as a sign of weakness, saying, “We Filipinos don’t look another person eye to eye. And sometimes you need to explain that to them so that they won’t think you feel inferior and eventually undermine you” (Interview, Isla, July 12, 2006). Manj, making the same point said, “Here, I have learned to be frank, honest and strong” (Interview, June 20, 2006).

Another cultural trait that emerged during the discussion is the decision to *go back to their native country when they reach retirement*. When they were still in their respective homeland, most of them were foreseeing to retire in the United States; however, while living here, two factors convinced them to change plans. Firstly, it is much cheaper to retire in their homeland. Secondly, their family will never send them to a retirement home. Unlike in the United States where some old people live in retirement villages or in assisted living facilities, in their society, they will still enjoy being with their family and community even during old age.

Cultural perspectives as hermeneutical lenses

In most cases, the participants used their personal experiences as a mirror in understanding the meaning of biblical passages. For example, they see Joseph more

clearly as an immigrant when they relate Joseph's experience with their own stories of struggles, betrayal, and triumph in diaspora life. In engaging with Nehemiah's migration experience, they see him more as a returning rebuilders when they apply the story in their experiences of going back to their home country bringing financial assistance, scholarship, Bibles, hymnals, and the like. In approaching the story of Daniel, they see Daniel's resolve of assimilating to the host culture without compromising the core of his own cultural values because they themselves have also embraced the multiethnic composition of American society. In short, their migration experiences became a window to discover in a fresh way the rich diaspora insights and narratives in biblical passages.

The participants' worldview of *morality* was also used as a tool in interacting with the Scriptures. Settling in a society that upholds a form of morality that is unfamiliar to them, the participants discussed how many of them developed moral values whose basic principles came from their homeland but was modified a little in forms that relate with the social makeup of their host culture. These sets of ethical values were used as windows that helped the participants to connect with diaspora Bible stories that celebrate faithfulness in diaspora life. For example, they were able to understand the complexity of Daniel's sociopolitical environment and his resolve to preserve his moral and spiritual standard in the face of persecution. The participants took hold of this important insight with their own diaspora-formed moral principles and allowed it to interact with their own stories of faithfulness and courage.

Scriptural and theological points

As I had done with the first group, I also took note of important theological points that emerged during the discussion. One of the subjects that developed that carries

significant theological value is how one's culture is seen as an expression of one's faith. This outlook is evident in how some cultural groups in their church *express service and worship to God in ways that reflect their cultural background*. I see this as a theological matter because it reflects a belief system that sees a God who works through the cultural paradigm of a people. It also reflects how spiritually significant native culture is to immigrants who reside in a cultural framework that for them is both strange and intimidating. This behavior implies that religion is less meaningful if it is expressed in an unfamiliar cultural manner. In an interview with Manj (Interview, Manj, July 5, 2006), he said, "*Sa personal na panalangin ko, Tagalog ang gamit ko* because I can express prayer much better and it is more personal [In my personal prayer, I used *Tagalog* because I can expressed prayer much better and it is more personal]."

Another issue that came up with significant theological connotation is the perspective that all churches are to reach out to people of all ethnic groups. This issue not only raised strategic concerns but missiological issues such as the issue of inclusivism. In their church mission statement, their inclusive purpose is reflected in the words, "To bring people of all races and walks of life to Jesus and membership in his family."

#### Postcolonial theme

Similar to the first group, in my observation with the second group, I was conscious of issues that emerged as having postcolonial themes. During the discussion of Joseph's successful migratory life, his consumer policy of making slaves out of the poor who asked for food was discussed (see Genesis 47:18-21). I asked the question, "Do you think this policy raised ethical and moral questions regarding issues on abuse of economic power?" The group was divided. On one side, many recognized the necessity

of bartering manual labor for food during crisis. On the other side, some have questioned Joseph's political intention of dominating over a weak community with the power of economic advantage. In fact, Abayomi was quick in further applying his argument with present situations. He comments, "I see now where rich nations learned it from. For example, they will not give its millions of dollars to developing countries unless there is something in that country. This is unethical" (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006). Most of them agree with Abayomi's remark.

Another issue that emerged from the discussion of Joseph's story is how Jacob and his family were treated well in Egypt as immigrants (Genesis 47:6), while others were treated as slaves (4:21). Relating this story to the participants as immigrants, I asked the question, "Do you see this as a similar depiction of current immigrants—some are treated well, some are not?" Those who responded connected the text with present conditions. Manj commented on how true preferential treatment is between the dealing of Mexicans and Canadians. Abayomi on the other hand describes discrimination by comparing the treatment of Cubans with that of Africans (Focus Group, The United Methodist Church in Union, April 2, 2006).

Another interesting subject in this story is the issue of *job opportunities* in a foreign land. It was narrated in Genesis 47:6 tells that Jacob and his clan were assigned to settle in Goshen and were allowed to practice their profession from back home—as shepherds. Reflecting from this story, I then asked the group to assess if, in general, "immigrants here in the U.S. practice their profession from back home." The group was synonymous in recognizing the sad fact that aside from an isolated few, immigrants in general do not practice their profession here in the United States. This discussion



stimulated an old feeling of disappointment. Three Filipino engineers in the group are not working as engineers. Enrique, for example, works as a dietary aide in a nursing home. Arguing along this line, in an interview I conducted with Abayomi on the day when immigrants rallied nationwide, I asked Abayomi if he supports that day's rally called, "A Day Without Immigrants." He responded, "100%. Because the founding years of this country was created by immigrants.... Many people in this society have forgotten their history. This is a way of history lesson." I then asked him what he thinks about the intention behind the proposal of criminalizing illegal immigrants. He explained:

Basically lawmakers believe that immigrants are taking jobs from Americans. And they don't want that.... Let me put it this way. A generation ago, it was the African-Americans who were the target of oppressions. Now it is the immigrants. (Interview with Abayomi, May 1, 2006)

Being an immigrant church, Abayomi's sentiments are shared by many of their church members.

#### Methodism

Unlike the first group, no particular Methodist theme emerged during the discussion. By implication, the group values multiethnicity as opposed to having a monocultural expression in terms of preferring a spiritual community. For example, in the pilot study I led with the same group last year, Enrique suggested in one of the sessions that each cultural group in their church be allowed in special occasions to express their distinctive Methodist worship traditions from back home, during their worship services. Many responded disapprovingly. Some pointed out that this setup can be done occasionally but not regularly. Many argued that they as a multiethnic church should

emphasize more their resemblance rather than each of their cultural distinctiveness in faith expressions.

Instead of bringing up their unique Methodist expressions from back home, they appreciated how global Methodism is—sharing the same tradition. This perspective is also one of the reasons why in joining a Methodist church in the United States, they were not expecting much difference from the Methodist church they left at home. Even if they are diverse, their same Methodist backgrounds help bind them together as one. Furthermore, the global structure of the UMC is one of the reasons why they choose a multiethnic congregation rather than a monocultural church.

#### The Chronological Account, Level 2

After I finished categorizing the information I gathered from Level 1 sessions, I conducted the Level 2 session. Presented here is the chronological account of the Level 2 session, which was held on September 23, 2006 in the residence of Page Family. The meeting lasted for 90 minutes ending at 9:00 in the evening.

The Level 2 session is a joint study of the two participating groups. Originally, I intended to choose specific individuals from Level 1 who would participate in Level 2. However, due to the difficulty of finding the right schedule where the preferred participants were available, I slightly broadened the list and allowed some whom I had not chosen previously also to come to the meeting—about five of them. Fortunately, their presence contributed positively in the discussion. There were 15 participants overall.

As customary to Filipino Bible study meetings, before the actual study, the group enjoyed a light meal prepared by the host. When everyone was settled, I led the group into an Icebreaker session called *Memory Lane* where participants are led to memorize

the province from which each participant originated. There was so much interaction, including laughter, and it was very informative for everyone. I then led a second icebreaker called *Filipino Immigrant Trivia*. In this icebreaker, the group was reminded of basic Filipino migration history in an enjoyable way.

After this introduction, we went to the more serious part. I explained the meaning of contextual theology in a simple way. I gave contemporary and biblical examples. I have also led the group in reviewing the highlights of the Level 1 session, including the interviews. Afterwards, I presented the summary of the Level 1 sessions in fourteen itemized themes. I explained to them that these themes are from them and not mine. Basically, I articulated the themes and modify a few of the terms in order to be understood by all of them.

First, I presented to them the theme *spirituality*. I explained to them that during the study discussions and interviews, the topic spirituality constantly emerged as a way of life enriched by the participants in diaspora life. I then asked their response. There was not much interaction except a unanimous affirmation that spirituality is a necessity to survive the difficulties in diaspora life. Puno, for example, further explained, “*Sa aking pangungulila dito, lalo akong napalapit sa Dios* [During my sadness, I became closer to God].”

The second theme is the *worldview of two homes*. I explained to them that in one particular session, the perspective of having two cultures emerged. This perspective was considered as a positive experience. When I presented this, Manj immediately responded saying, “We adults, we have two homes, but a child or youth.... [T]hey easily forget their original home.” Some agreed with him while others emphasized the fact that the parents’

responsibility id to remind their children about their Filipino culture. Although it is a little out of the topic, Enrique expressed how much he missed home because at home he can work as an engineer but in the United States he cannot. Others expressed the same sentiment and I sense that sadness filled the room while discussing this topic. I then asked how homesickness could be overcome. Many said by calling home. There was an interesting discussion as many of them narrated their own stories of how their friends and relatives in the Philippines think of the United States as a paradise when they are speaking to them over the phone.

The third theme is Filipinos' *adaptability to a multicultural environment*. I presented to them that in two separate sessions, they expressed how Filipinos could adapt easily to a multicultural environment. Many affirmed this fact and narrated additional stories.

Kay: being under the Spanish regime for more than 300 years, *meron tayong* [we have] cultural traits that can easily blend with western culture here in the U.S." *Ang mga* Filipinos, *ang galing natin sa grammar at* written. *Nakakadapt tayo dahil sa ating* background [Filipinos are good in grammar and written. We can easily adapt because of our background]. But when we spontaneously speak in English, we fail."

Manj: Dr. Benigno Reyes said, "Physically, we Filipinos are Indo-Malay, psychologically we are Anglo-Saxons, and emotionally, we are Castillians."

Kay: *Pagnagoorient kami ng mga* foreign nurses, *mas madaling mag-pick up ang mga* Filipino nurses [When we orient foreign nurses, Filipino nurses can easily pick up what we are saying].

The fourth theme is *damayan*. I presented to them how they emphasized in various sessions that *damayan* helped them cope with the various difficulties in diaspora life.

They affirmed this fact, but Enong argued that *damayan* also depends in what part of the United States one is located. He argues, "There are some States here in the U.S. that

Filipinos will ignore you if you are a fellow Filipino.” Others supported this thought by sharing their own experiences of how they were looked down on by fellow Filipinos. In general, however, they appreciated how the *damayan* attitude is being observed in their church.

The theme I presented next is *the attitude of preserving their culture*. Again it was emphasized the importance of being wise in discerning what cultural trait is beneficial to be preserved and what cultural trait needs to be forgotten. Greg asserts, “We must love our own country and us being Filipinos. After a while, Greg commented about Filipinos’ negative traits saying, “*Merong mga Pilipino na ayaw ng magtiwala sa kapwa Pilipino. Merong mga Pilipino na umiiwas sa kapwa Pilipino* [Some Filipinos do not want to trust fellow Filipinos anymore. Some Filipinos avoid other Filipinos].” He then added, “*Matsismis kasi ang mga Pilipino* [Filipinos are gossipers].” Manj however responded that this is not only true with Filipinos but also true with other immigrant groups. “I have talked with other immigrants and according to them they don’t want to join people of their own nationality because of gossips and other negative things,” Manj argued.

The next theme is *connection to homeland*. I explained to them based on what they have discussed in some sessions how important for them to maintain their connection with their family, relatives, home church, and friends through *pasalubong*, financial help, scholarship program, regular phone calls, etc. There was so much laughter when they told stories of how relatives and friends think that dollars in the United States are being picked up in streets freely. Just as in Level 1, they disappointedly narrated how their relatives expect much from them and sometimes without knowing how hard life is living in another land.

The seventh theme is *toughness*. I explained to them that some of them emphasized how they adapted an outspoken, strong, and assertive attitude because Filipinos natural quietness and politeness are sometimes interpreted as signs of inferiority. Puno explains, “*Minsan pagnagpapakumbaba ka, akala nila mas mataas na sila sa iyo. Wala ng pakundangan kung itrato ka. Hindi naman ganoon dapat* [Sometimes, when you are humbling yourself, they thought that they are higher than you. They treat you without respect. It should not be like that].” Some also cited a Western gesture of calling someone that communicates absolute discourteousness to Filipinos. Greg demonstrated it by his curling finger gesturing toward himself. Everyone agrees that it is indeed a rude gesture in Filipino culture. In all of these, the participants affirmed the importance of being tough within their current society.

The next theme is *morality*. I presented to them that in one particular session they discussed that some of them have developed moral values whose basic principles came from their homeland but were contextualized in forms that relate with the social makeup of their host culture. They affirmed this fact and challenged themselves to save their teenagers from the influence of western liberal morality. Some emphasized the importance of their children going to church at an early stage so that the word of God will be planted in their hearts.

Accidentally, I overlooked two of the themes—*respect for the elderly* and *close familial ties*. As compensation, I included items in the follow-up questionnaire that specifically addresses these two themes. They are questions 7 and 8 of the questionnaire as indicated in Appendix I, and the result of the participants’ response is summarized in Appendix J.

The next theme is *God's providence*. I presented to them that in many occasions, participants brought up how God used circumstances in bringing them to the United States. This perspective strengthens them to face their struggles courageously knowing that God is the author of their diaspora experience. Most of them also expressed that they see their migration as part of God's purpose in order to help people financially back in their homeland through their *padala* (financial support). Many affirmed this point when I presented it and they narrated again some of their stories of how God miraculously opened doors for them to come to the United States. They also stressed the difficulty of coming to the U.S. especially post-9/11.

The next theme I presented is the *expression of culture in faith and worship*. I told them that in one session, they emphasized the importance of Filipino churches incorporating their culture in their worship experience and fellowship. The interaction was short and it focused mainly on the reiteration of the issue that was brought during the first level session about the reading of the gospel in *Tagalog* in their Sunday worship.

I intentionally skipped the issue of *inclusivism* to avoid debates. The participants of Level 2 are combined members of a Filipino church and a multiethnic church and one issue of disagreement that emerged in Level 1 sessions is the desire to be inclusive in mission and evangelism as opposed to focusing only in reaching Filipinos. In fact this issue is one of the reasons why some Filipinos prefer a monocultural Filipino church while others prefer a multiethnic church. Some are eager to reach out even to non-Filipinos while others see greater advantage in mission by focusing their outreach to Filipinos alone. If I had opened up this issue, I was afraid that it might provoke heated

arguments and paralyze the later discussion due to negative feelings. Furthermore, I got most of the data I needed under this theme during the first level sessions.

The next theme I presented is the issue of *struggle for equality*. During the first level sessions, the participants brought up economic, political and social concerns that they perceived as oppressive to the condition of the immigrants. Some of the issues that emerged are unfair treatments of immigrants—some immigrants are treated well while some are not, inability to practice their trained profession, resulting in low paying jobs and downgrading, and, international economic policies that hurt developing countries. When I presented this point, I first sensed sadness in the room. They probably recalled their own experiences of being discriminated against.

Kay: Here doctors cannot work as doctors. Doctors work as a nurse.

Enrique: *Pero noong dati pa* (But before), doctors can work as doctors. But the law has changed.

Later on, the event, “Rally: A Day without Immigrant,” was brought up and many of them have their own opinions. Some reemphasized the fact that everyone in the United States are immigrants including the Anglos and the only natives are the Indians. They talked simultaneously on this subject. Here are some of the highlights.

Greg: *Kung walang* immigrants *wala silang uutusan*. *Kung wala sila, wala ang mga* big companies [If there were no immigrants they would not give orders to anyone. If they (the immigrants) were not here, there would be no big companies].

Enrique: Immigrants are important and they should not accuse them as criminals because they are immigrants.

Manj: Those rallies are very important. These are very important to us minorities—that they have a common cause. Like for example, without the Civil Right Movements that was led by the black community, even until now even us Filipinos, we will have many restrictions. So we are grateful for these things.



I also presented to them the theme, *connectionalism* in context of Methodism. I explained to them that in some sessions in Level 1, they appreciated how global Methodism shares the same tradition and organization. This connectional organization is also one of the reasons why, in joining a Methodist church in the United States, the participants were not expecting much difference from the Methodist church they left at home. Furthermore, most explained how they were not disappointed with their expectation: Methodist churches have been warmed in welcoming them and generous in helping them with their needs:

Greg: *Ako nga binigyan pa ko ng kotse. Ako'y dating Katoliko. Pero sa Metodista, dito ko naranasan yung kulang na lang ay kupkupon ka ng kapwa mo Metodista* [They even gave me a car. Before I was a Catholic. But here in the Methodist Church, I experienced almost being adopted by a fellow Methodist].

Manj: *Pero kahit naman sa ibang mainline denomination, ganon din, may pagtulong din. Wala ding difference* [But it is also true in other mainline churches, the same thing, there is help. There is no difference].

Kay: *Galing ako ng probinsya. Saka lang ako pumunta ng Maynila para magaral, at humanap agad ako ng Methodist church. At sa Knox UMC, very much welcome ka dahil Methodist ka kahit saan ka galing. Parang ganoon na din, dito sa U.S. So parang tradition din that people are welcoming you kahit saang bansa ka galing—Dahil global nga tayo* [I came from the province. I came to Manila to study, and I immediately looked for a Methodist Church. And in Knox UMC, you are very much welcome—because you are a Methodist wherever you came from. It is like that here in the U.S. Its like a tradition that people are welcoming you wherever you came from—because we are global].

The participants agreed that this study was helpful to them as immigrants. Many of them once again expressed appreciation for the bible study sessions. Before I closed, I asked one more very important question: Choose among the four: (a) I am a Filipino; (b) I am a Filipino American; (c) I am an American-Filipino; (d) I am an American. The response

was simultaneous, and all of them chose (b) I am a Filipino American. They explained that they are more Filipino than American. Here are some of the highlights:

Enrique: We are still Filipinos because we are Filipinos by blood and in values.

Manj: *Pero yung* younger generation *iba na. Kagaya ng anak ko*. I have a 9 year old daughter. I asked her if she want to go back to the Philippines and she said, “No.” She said that the U.S. is her country and not the Philippines. And I can’t disagree with her.

Participants: (Simultaneous response) but it is our responsibility as parents to teach them that they are still Filipinos.

I decided to end the discussion because it was getting late and some still had a long way to travel to get home. I gave the responsibility of closing the session to Kay, the Filipino group leader, to gather prayer concerns. After a song and a short prayer session, the meeting ended.

In this chapter, I presented in detail the information collected both through library research and field research. In the next chapter, I explain how this information was categorized, analyzed and utilized as components of the contextual theology of Filipino American diasporic identity.

#### CHAPTER 4: THE ANALYSIS

The analysis section is divided into two major sections: the interpretation level and the impact level. Although both of these levels engage in data analysis, each level is uniquely designed to process the data in different ways distinctive from each other and done sequentially after each other so as to produce the precise outcome.

##### Data Analysis—Interpretation Level

This section describes the level of interpretation and is presented in two divisions. The first part is the analysis or interpretation of both cultural themes and scriptural texts. The second part is the outcome of the comparative analysis.

The second level focus group session was only done once. Before the meeting, I studied the data gathered from Level 1, identified the cultural themes, and arranged the gathered information in a way that the participants could go directly to discussion instead of spending much time on scrutinizing and categorizing the raw data. I also presented to them the fourteen cultural themes with the intent of obtaining a response of approval or disapproval. In other words, I summarized and categorized what they themselves have said and done and asked them for further discussion. In general, the participants collectively and fully affirmed all the points that I summarized. From this discussion, I obtained additional insights, stories, biblical reflection and even minor corrections. In Level 1, one of my findings is the participants' unfamiliarity with a contextual way of reading the Scriptures. Most of them, in fact, were pleased to discover that they could actually read the Scriptures with the point of view of an immigrant. They expressed in many ways how delighted they were in discovering diaspora stories in the Bible that greatly reflect their experiences. Because most of them are beginners to this kind of

reading posture, they were not able to cite other scriptural texts that depict migration aside from the Bible passages I provided in Level 1. In Level 2, the case is basically the same. Most of their biblical allusions are from passages that we actually studied in Level 1—passages I provided as study texts. Thus, I used the Bible passages in Level 1 as the foundational scriptural texts, and I allowed those texts to interact with other diaspora scriptural texts that were not brought up during Levels 1 and 2. Even if they were not discussed during the focus group sessions, I made some of the participants interact with these passages through correspondence (see the follow-up questionnaire in Appendix I). Some of those responses are also indicated in this section.

As reflected in the contextual theology model, Figure 4 (see p. 56), the main purpose of this part of the analysis is basically finding “parallelism” between the culture and the biblical diaspora accounts or what Luis Pantoja calls “analogous experience.” In emphasizing that in order for a contextual theology to theologize on God’s perspective regarding the Filipino diaspora, he argues:

To do so, one must appeal first to the Bible and find out what God has to say about the subject. Furthermore, we must depend on the account of God’s actions towards specific people groups in the Bible and also moved beyond God’s dealing with the Jews. Then in recognition of God’s present activity in human history, we draw upon the contemporary global data and insights particularly about the Filipino context that shall augment and complement the biblical material. (2002:70)

In another passage of the same chapter, he adds, “We shall take heed even as we attempt to formulate a theology in the light of the biblical history with which the Filipino diaspora can find some analogous experience” (2002:77). Finding meaning and connection with the “analogous experience” between the culture and the Bible will give birth to a contextual theology that reflects Filipino diaspora identity.

Some of the insights here are not just reflections of the data from Level 2 but also from Level 1. In Chapter 3, the presentation of the data from Level 1 sessions is mainly observational. Here in Chapter 4, when data from Level 1 sessions are mentioned, they are mostly interpretative. Lastly, the scriptural texts are discussed together with cultural themes in this presentation.

### Cultural Themes and Scriptural Texts

These points are not in any hierarchical order. I listed them as they emerged from the information I gathered. In my initial sorting, 23 cultural themes emerged. Because some of them are similar and can be put in one category, I reduced the list to 14. Every scriptural text is discussed together with its matching cultural theme.

Furthermore, the data from history, demography, and literature review do not interact in this segment. The interpolation of those data is completed in Level 3, the Impact Level. As explained earlier, the only discussion presented here is between the cultural themes and the scriptural texts.

The first one is *spirituality*. As explained earlier, spirituality in the context of diaspora is a way of life adapted by most Filipino immigrants after being confronted by the many difficulties in migration—family separation, racism, joblessness, culture shock, etc. Many testify that in their diaspora life, they have become more receptive to religious things and eventually accepted the gospel and joined a spiritual community. During the Level 1 sessions, the participants affirmed this tendency by citing their own experiences of longing for spiritual things when they were facing the struggles of being new immigrants. During the Level 2 session, I presented to the participants that spirituality is one of the points they discussed in Level 1 as a diaspora developed way of life. They

jointly affirmed this fact and have given additional examples from their own experiences of how migration ignites their spiritual hunger for God and for a faith community. They affirmed that spirituality, and having a spiritual community are necessities for Filipino immigrants to overcome the difficulties attached to migration. Spiritual development in diasporic life does not, however, imply that there is lesser spiritual consciousness in their homeland, the Philippines. On the contrary, spirituality is a deeply embedded cultural element in Filipinos' consciousness. When Filipinos migrate, this deeply embedded religiosity is strongly awakened by the unfamiliar crises that confront them.

In almost all of the scriptural passages studied, this particular cultural theme always emerged as a vital part of many discussions. When we studied the story of Joseph and the relocation of his family to Egypt, some of the participants applied Joseph's difficult experience with their own diaspora hardship and emphasized that their experience with the same difficulties taught them to become closer to God. When studying the life of Daniel, some expressed how this same spirituality, with the help of their faith community, has strengthened their moral convictions. When discussing how migration played a part in the mass conversion that transpired during Pentecost, some testified how their own migration experiences led them to be receptive to the gospel's message and to be involved in a spiritual community. Some also mentioned stories they hear of how Filipinos, when they migrated to regions such as the Middle East, where the Christian faith is suppressed, discover more meaning to their Christian faith and practice. These Christians eventually become "unofficial" missionaries in those lands.

In other words, the participants were able to relate their spiritual experiences with the scriptural texts because they were able to see themselves in the life of the biblical

diaspora characters and recognize the same God who strengthens their spiritual life in the midst of diaspora crises.

Another theme that emerged is what I called *the worldview of two homes*. As explained earlier, the worldview of two homes is the positive perspective of experiencing two homes and two cultures as opposed to having a sense of homelessness—a sense of losing the old while still unable to adapt to the host’s culture. Homelessness is a crisis experienced by many Filipino immigrants who are unable to face the difficulties of leaving the homeland and adapting to a new home. Many eventually feel homeless—not having either. The participants affirmed not only the reality but the necessity of having both the perspective and the attitude of living in two homes at the same time. They affirmed the impossibility of Filipino immigrants surviving in diasporic life if they do not learn the balance between assimilating to the new home and preserving the memories of the homeland. Some of them expressed their struggle with homesickness. They explained that even if they found a new home on U.S soil, in their hearts nothing can still replace the “hominess” of their homeland. This retention implies that even if most of them are already residing in the United States for more than ten years now, their psychological and cultural makeup has mostly remained Filipino.

The scriptural text we studied that greatly relates with two-home concept is Daniel chapter 1. They see the story of Daniel as a great depiction of a life who adapted a two-home-worldview. They see Daniel as an ideal model of living the balance of assimilating to the host culture while preserving the essentials of the home culture.

Manj on the other hand commented that two-home attitude is not usually the case with the children of the Filipino immigrants who are born here. Using the metaphor of

home, he explained, “An adult in coming here can adapt to having two homes. But if children migrate, they easily forget their old home” (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). The group agrees, and some narrate how their children who also experienced migration at a very young age, have easily adapted to the cultural practices, language, and worldview of the United States and show significant loss of Filipinoness. Most of them did not stop there but emphasized the important role of parents in passing their cultural heritage to the next generation of Filipino Americans.

A scriptural text that greatly connects with parenting in the context of diaspora is a passage in the book of Deuteronomy which is a part of a long Mosaic address that admonishes the Israelites to be faithful as they commence their life in a new land. Deuteronomy 11:19-21 says,

Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. (NIV)

Through a diaspora lens, this passage can be a great scriptural guide to immigrant parents who recognize the importance of immortalizing the spirit of their cultural heritage by faithfully and effectively passing them on to their American-born children.

The third theme is *Filipinos' adaptability to a multiracial environment*.

Adaptability is a diaspora attitude that immigrants immediately embraced after realizing that many cities in the United States are rapidly becoming ethnically pluralistic. Everyone affirms this point and has identified various reasons for it. Kay, relating the concept of adaptability to the Philippines' centuries of colonization, argues, “Being under the Spanish rule for more than 300 years, Filipinos have adapted the colonizer's culture that



can easily blend with U.S. culture.... For example, being in a society where Spanish is the second major language, we Filipinos can easily learn Spanish because there are so many Spanish words in our vocabulary” (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). Manj, emphasizing the diversity within a Filipino individual, quoted a particular study saying, “Physically, we Filipinos are Indo-Malay; psychologically, we are Anglo-Saxons; and emotionally, we are Castilians” (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). Some narrate instances where people of other nationalities told them how Filipinos are so affable and how they seem never to say, “No.” Kay strengthened this point by explaining that in her workplace, when they are orienting foreign nurses, “Filipino nurses learn fast and can easily pick up the system unlike other foreign nurses” (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). The group basically affirmed that because of the Philippines’ past experiences of being colonized, its current westernization, and its own regional diversity, Filipinos easily adapt to a multicultural setting.

A scriptural text that is significantly applicable to the concept of adaptability is the passage about the infilling of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost. Luke narrates,

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Acts 2: 5-13, NIV)

The significance of this story highlights the translatability of the gospel in various languages. This biblical account depicts the Spirit as one who transcends the diversity of tongues and declares an epoch where God has built a community that embraces the same gospel message even if their unique cultural identity remains. This story illustrates immigrant faith communities who maintained their cultural expressions while living in the midst of a multicultural environment and have connected with other faith communities of diverse cultural backgrounds.

All the participants affirmed this fact whether they are from the multiethnic church or from the Filipino church. The participants from the multicultural church clearly experienced multiethnicity being evident in their membership composition, and multicultural activities. The participants from the Filipino church also experienced multiethnicity in a lesser degree through their regular involvement with various district and conference-wide events that celebrates cultural diversity. The participants also emphasize the fact that, compared to other Asian groups, Filipinos are the most adaptable to assimilate to a multicultural setting.

Another theme that was constantly discussed is *damayan*. In the context of migration, *damayan* or the Filipino cultural practice of sharing is developed in many Filipino immigrant communities. *Damayan* goes beyond economic status, regional origin, political position, and religious affiliation. In other words, *damayan* overlooks the various social barriers that divided people in the Philippines and welcomes the immigrant as simply a *kababayan*. During the Level 2 session, when I mentioned that *damayan* is one of the cultural themes that emerged during the Level 1 session, everyone verifies its absolute necessity. Some commented that *damayan* is not always observed in some

Filipino communities. They reemphasized the fact that other cultural traits such as regionalism kill the *damayan* spirit. The participants from the Filipino church testified that their church is a great testimony of how a Filipino community can overcome regional diversity. Furthermore, they reiterated the point they made during Level 1 sessions that *damayan* is a form of outreach that some of their church members have been doing for a long time in reaching out to Filipino immigrants.

A biblical parallel of *damayan* cultural practice is found in the book of Acts. Luke narrates:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. (Acts 4:32-34, NIV)

Here, the author describes the early church's lifestyle of *damayan*. Their spiritual conversion and powerful encounter with the Spirit led them to a life of mutual generosity, intense compassion and radical common economy. This phenomenon was narrated as one of the leading factors that led to the church's intense numerical growth. Furthermore, their *damayan* is a manifestation of their collective awakening to the fact that they who have financial ability should help the poor in their community. These two factors are the same driving force why the *damayan* attitude of the participants was carried and practiced in their current diaspora life. First, they consider *damayan* as a significant manifestation of the faith they claim. Without them being members of their faith community, their individual *damayan* mentality will not be cultivated by a motivating group of people and by the inspiration of the gospel. Secondly, *damayan* in their case is a communal response to current crises many Filipino immigrants are facing.

The opposite of *damayan* spirit is also illustrated in a later part of the church's early days. Luke narrates, "In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food" (Luke 6:1, NIV). This biblical story is a relevant example of how regionalism can devastate the unity of the church. Just like the biblical account, where there was preferential treatment for one regional group against another, regionalism is also a frail point that devastates the *damayan* spirit in some Filipino immigrant communities.

Further explaining that the spirit of *damayan* varies, Enong remarks, "*Minsan depende din sa kinalalagyan mo. Merong ibang State dito sa U.S. na hindi ka papansinin ng mga kapwa mo Filipino*" [Sometimes, it depends on where you are. There are some States here in the U.S. where you will be ignored by fellow Filipinos] (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). Some responded that in cases such as the West Coast, the reason can be attributed to the huge number of Filipinos in that area. In other words, the value that was once attached to the rarity of meeting and helping a fellow Filipino is gradually getting lost in the overwhelming presence of Filipinos.

Another theme that was emphasized is *the participants' lifestyle to preserve the good culture they brought from their homeland*. Many Filipinos develop a way of life to conserve good Filipino cultural values while assimilating to the host culture. This way of life has been fully affirmed by the group. The participants also emphasized that Filipino culture has negative elements that are much better forgotten than kept. Greg asked if he could slightly divert the topic and tell a story. After narrating a story of a friend who was cheated and betrayed by a fellow Filipino, he concluded, "*Merong mga Pilipino na ayaw*

*magtiwala sa kapwa Pilipino. Merong mga Pilipino na umiiwas sa kapwa Pilipino* [Some Filipinos don't trust a fellow Filipino. Some Filipinos avoid fellow Filipinos]" (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006).

The theme of preserving the Filipinos' good culture focuses on relationships. The participants emphasized that the good cultural elements are those that strengthen the relationship of Filipino communities. *Bayanihan* (neighborly attitude), close family ties, gratitude, hospitality, respect for elderly and *damayan* are some the cultural pillars of a strong Filipino immigrant community.

Again, this theme greatly relates with Daniel's resolve to be faithful with his Jewish custom, diet, and spirituality. The book of Daniel narrates how he exhibited faithfulness in preserving his culture. Under threat of execution, he defied the royal decree of worshipping a graven image. Looking back, idolatry was the main reason why Yahweh allowed the Israelites to be conquered and be exiled to Babylon. Idolatry was like a negative culture that infiltrated the supposedly consecrated way of life of the Jews. Daniel knew that in order for him to be a catalyst of restoring and preserving their identity as a chosen people, he needed to refuse all forms of societal conformity—having cultural practices similar to the idolatrous ways his forefathers previously embraced.

Another theme that emerged is their commitment to maintain their *connection to their homeland*. This connection is established and maintained by various practices and systems such as *pasalubong*, monetary help, scholarship program, regular phone calls, etc. Most of the participants believe that God allowed them to migrate so that they could financially support their friends and loved ones back home.

The group once again confirmed the validity of this cultural theme. This time however, they showed a livelier approval of the point. Almost everyone talked simultaneously and humorously, giving their own description of their *padala* (financial support) to their family and loved ones. When the simultaneous response subsided, Greg disappointedly but lightheartedly comments, “*Pero akala ng mga tao sa Pilipinas, napupulot lang sa daan ang pera dito* [But people in the Philippines thought that money here are just being picked up in the streets]” (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). The group laughed and responded with affirmation that they have the same experience with some of their recipients.

Later on, the group also affirmed the importance of this cultural trait. Many of them uphold that God blesses them so that they can be channels of blessing to their less fortunate relatives and friends in the Philippines. In the Level 1 sessions, this attitude has been thoroughly connected to Nehemiah’s project of rebuilding the wall. The group recognized that walls of the Philippines are broken too, referring mainly to the Philippine economy. Just like Nehemiah, whose heart was crying for the restoration of Israel even if he was already in the most convenient place in Persia, the participants emphasized that in spite of the economic prosperity they experienced in the United States, their hearts are still in the Philippines. This sentiment is express in their faithful commitment to send dollars to their loved ones. This simplest act of charity is their one way of showing how deeply they are still connected to their homeland.

*Toughness* is another theme greatly emphasized. Toughness is a characteristic developed by some Filipino immigrants because their new environment tends to demean their character and skill because they are Third World persons and carry a foreign accent.

Filipinos in general, are quiet, courteous, and sweet people, but these Filipino manners are interpreted sometimes by Americans and other ethnic groups as signs of weakness. In some of the interviews in Level 1, the participants explained that as a survival mode, some Filipino immigrants adapted an outspoken, strong, and assertive behavior.

The reaction of the participants is approving but quite sentimental. When I presented to them that toughness is one of the cultural themes that emerged during the Level 1 discussion, I felt that the point has touched some unhealed inner wounds in some of them. Some expressed their displeasure with people of other race that have taken the advantage of treating them disrespectfully because Filipinos appear to be weak and passive. Puno asserted, “*Minsan pagnagpapakumbaba ka, akala nila mas mataas na sila sa iyo. Wala ng pakundangan kung itrato ka. Hindi naman ganoon dapat* [Sometimes when you are humbling yourself, people think that they are better than you. They treat you without respect. It should not be like that]” (Focus Group, Interpretation Level, September 23, 2006). Everyone responded simultaneously with the same sentiment. Some have also cited a western gesture of calling someone that communicates absolute discourteousness to Filipinos. Greg demonstrated it by his pointing finger moving towards him. Everyone agrees that it is indeed a rude gesture in Filipino culture. In these part of the sessions, the participants affirmed the importance of Filipinos to be tough in their new society.

The story of Esther in the Bible conveys the message of toughness in diaspora life. Although Esther is an emblem of charm and beauty, she is also a depiction of courage and strength in diaspora life. When she and her people were under threat of annihilation, she daringly confronted her enemy in a serene and confident way that

eventually made her win the heart of King Xerxes and be victorious. The Book of Esther narrates Esther's instructions in response to a grave threat:

Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish. (Esther 4:16, NIV)

Esther's character reflects most of the participants' temperament in diaspora life: a combination of politeness and toughness. The difficulties of living in a foreign land and being accustomed to a confrontational way influenced them to be vocally and actively assertive but without letting go of that sweet and courteous Filipino conduct.

Another theme emphasized is *morality or ethics*. Settling in a society that upholds a culture of morality and ethics that is different from their original homes, the participants discussed that many of them developed moral values whose basic principles came from their homeland. The participants fully affirmed that without establishing a set of ethical standards that is based from their homeland values, they would be swept away by the current of liberalism and tolerance in the society where they presently live. Most of the discussion centered on their struggle with the westernized moral values adopted by their children. They spoke of the widening gap between them and their American-born-children who sometimes refused to comply with their Filipino-made moral standards, branding it obsolete and irrelevant. The gap, for that reason, is not only generational but mostly cultural.

This theme greatly relates with the story of Daniel. The participants rediscovered Daniel's moral stability in the context of diaspora. Prior to this study, the participants were already well versed in Daniel chapter 1 but they had not recognized the significance



of every point in the context and light of migration experiences. Through this study, they could now see Daniel's story as one of moral and ethical stability.

The participants also brought up the theme, *respect for elders*. During the Level 1 sessions in both study groups, when asked the question, "What is the most important cultural trait or perspective that you will keep and you intend to pass on to your children," 98 percent of the participants said, "Respect for elderly." According to both groups of participants, this attitude is mainly a response to the cultural trait of disrespect they see among teenagers towards the elderly, especially their own parents. Admittedly, some of them stated that this culture has subtly crept in their own homes. As a result, it is slowly contributing to the ever-widening generational and cultural gap between them as parents and their American-born children.

In a group interview I did with the Page family, one of the ethical issues that emerged is the parents' expectation of their children to ask permission when leaving the house. Even if three of their children are already in their 20s, they still want their children to ask for consent or to inform them before leaving the house because this is the way they were brought in the Philippines. Kay explained:

*Umaalis sila ng bahay ng hindi sinasabi sa akin. Kasi dito sa America, labas na lang ng labas kahit kailan. Sa Pilipinas kailangang magpaalam ka saka may curfew*" [They just go out without telling me because here in America, one can go out anytime. In the Philippines, you need to ask for permission and there is a curfew]. (Group Interview, Page Family, September 23, 2006)

Unfortunately, the children are having a hard time observing this house rule. According to the parents, leaving the house without permission is an expression of disrespect. One of the daughters also pointed out that compared to her friends' family the gap between them and their parents is not that bad. She explained:

I think our family is closer to each other. That generation gap is not that much of a complication.... We get their jokes and they get our jokes.... Our slang, they get sometimes. The generation gap is like language too. We kind of like to learn from each other (Group Interview, September 23, 2006).

Explaining her side a little bit more, she added, “I know that my brothers are leaving the house without saying anything. But I really tried to” (Group Interview, September 23, 2006). May stressed that her parents did an excellent job in teaching her Filipino ways. Stories like these are common among Filipino immigrants and it was further emphasized during the focus group session. The participants expressed their desire to teach their children as much as possible the moral and ethical values of Filipinos.

There are many scriptural texts that encourage respect for the elderly. There are, however, only a few that are found in the context of diaspora. One of the most important texts under this theme is Leviticus 19:32, which says, “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord” (NIV). This text is located in the context of Moses’ admonition to the Israelites to remain faithful to Yahweh as they start their new life in a new land. In the midst of nations that uphold different sets of ethical principles, the Israelites are commanded to observe proper respect for the elders in their community. It is also amazing to observe that immediately after verse 32 is a verse that admonishes the Israelites to show kindness to the foreigners who lives in their territory (Leviticus 19:33). This admonition and many others were given to the Israelites in context of their preparation to resettle in a new land.

Filipinos’ cultural practice of close *familial ties* was also brought up. One of the firmest among Filipino cultural traits is the strong accent on having a close family. In the participants’ homeland, many families stay together for most of their lives even as other

members of the family become independent adults. Even if strong familial ties is contrary to the current society where they are residing, most of the participants brought this cultural trait and applied it in their way of building a family in the United States.

In the group interview I conducted with the Page family, they expressed this concern. As presented in Level 1, parents have disclosed their fear that their children will one day leave them to have an independent life. Formerly, they were able to reach a compromise with their children and manage to convince them to stay home even after they reached the age of 18. They know that eventually their children will need to affirm their independence as they settle down to get married and have their own house.

Ancient cultures like that of Israel have a high regard for a close family lifestyle. This is very well reflected in some passages in the Scriptures. The establishment of the family is safeguarded and cultivated by many of the Mosaic commandment. Many genealogical records in the Old Testament also testify to the ancient way of close family ties. The book of Proverbs also shows the value of the family by its list of instructions of how to conduct a family pleasing to God. In the New Testament, the Pauline epistles contains a lot of directives on how to build a godly family, giving specific admonitions to husbands, wives, children, and parents.

A biblical story that depicts close familial ties in the context of diaspora is narrated in the Book of Ruth. Naomi with her husband migrated to Moab, fleeing a famine in Judah. Her two sons married Moabite women. After the death of both her husband and sons, she decided to go back to her homeland. Ruth decided to migrate with Naomi to a new land that is entirely unfamiliar to her. In spite of the contempt people may have thrown at her due to being a foreigner, Ruth stayed with Naomi and together

they exhibited what the power of close family ties can do in facing the difficult life of settlers.

Another theme that emerged is the *providence of God*. The participants brought up each of their own stories of how God used circumstances in bringing them to the United States. This perspective strengthens them to face their struggles knowing that God not only favors them but is with them in their diaspora life. Some of the participants also brought up that God's purpose of bringing them to the United States is not just focused on one's economic success alone but on God's larger agenda of reaching out to other Filipino immigrants and helping people financially in their homeland through their *padala* (financial support).

A very applicable biblical story that connects to this cultural theme is the story of Joseph. He became an immigrant in Egypt and later became its governor. The road going there is not easy. He was sold by his brothers as slave and was transported to Egypt reluctantly. He was accused of a crime he did not commit and was thrown to prison. After years of hardship, he interpreted the Pharaoh's dream, which became his redemptive ticket to freedom and promotion. Many years after, God used him to save his people from famine. He later said to his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20, NIV). In an interview I conducted separately with Ariel, when I asked him with which diaspora biblical character that he best relates, he chose Joseph. He explained:

*Joseph. Hanggang sa huling bahagi ng buhay niya, hindi niya naiintindihan kung bakit, narealize may purpose pala ang Dios sa kanya. Ganoon ako. Hindi ko naiintindihan kung bakit ako nandito nuon. Through the years, nalaman ko na dahil nga narito ako, nakakakatulong na ko sa pamilya ko sa Pilipinas [Joseph. Even at the last part of his life he did not understand God's purpose for his life. Just like me. I do not understand*

before why I was here. Through the years, I understand that because I am here, I can help my family back in the Philippines]. *At malaki ang naitulong church para magkaroon ako ng tamang direksyon ang isang immigrant na katulad ko* [And the church helps a lot for an immigrant like me to have a right direction]. (Ariel, Interview 2006)

This same perspective is shared by the participants. They see God's hands behind every circumstance that led them to migrate. Just like Joseph, they do not only recognize their migration as God's gift of promotion but rather as divine design that God has fulfilled in providing for the needs of the community they have left in the Philippines through their monetary support. They, like Joseph are performing their calling faithfully to provide for the financial needs of their family, relatives, community, and home church. This certainty also inspires them to be strong when they encounter various difficulties in diaspora life. Knowing that God is the author of their migration, they believe that God is also with them providing for every one of their needs in diaspora life.

The participants also emphasized the importance of *expressing their culture in faith and worship*. It has also been stressed in Level 1 that it is essential that in some significant ways, Filipino churches should incorporate their cultural values and practices in their activities. Not only does this worship and faith expression help preserve their cultural ways, but it also helps them articulate their worship in forms and symbols that are meaningful and relevant to them.

The story of Daniel greatly relates to this particular cultural theme because of how Daniel demonstrated his faithful adherence to Jewish practices while living in an environment that strongly pressured him to forget his Jewish ways. The Book of Daniel narrates how the other governors of Babylon plotted to have him killed by convincing King Darius to issue a decree to pray to no God but to the king for thirty days (6:1-9).

Daniel was determined, nonetheless, to keep his religious ways of praying three times a day (6:10). He kept his religious identity and worshipped God openly in ways that is meaningful to him even if they offended the people around him. He allowed his religion to be seen and heard through his faith, prayer, and worship in a culture that lures immigrants to assimilate and forget their ways of expressing religion.

The theme *equality* was also brought up. During Level 1 postcolonial thoughts, sentiments, and experiences emerged. These are economic, political and social issues that are perceived by the group as oppressive to the situation of the immigrants. Some of the issues that emerged are: unfair treatments of immigrants—some immigrants are treated well while some are not; inability to practice profession—resulting to having jobs that are under paid and downgrading; international economic policies which hurt developing countries such as the Philippines.

When I presented this theme during the Level 2 session, the group affirmed it unanimously. In their simultaneous response is a feeling of sadness and disappointment. Many have once again testified to their hardships in coping with a job that was not suitable with their academic training and work experience. Some recalled their prominent jobs back home while others remembered their early days of relocating in the United States, coping with a job they were not expecting to do.

Some Bible stories significantly describe diaspora characters and communities struggling for equality, justice, and freedom. One of those is Esther's battle to save her people from a vindictive attempt to annihilate the Jewish people. Another one is Joseph's story of ending up in prison due to an unsubstantiated criminal accusation charged against him. Some of Paul's mission journey is painted by several persecutions not only

because of the gospel but because he was a Jew preaching in a foreign land. Luke recorded an example in the book of Acts where people brought Paul and his companion to the authorities in the public square saying, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice” (Acts 16:20, NIV).

These biblical stories can serve as a great inspiration to those who undergo similar experiences of inequality and injustice while living in a foreign land. They entail the promise that the God who helped the biblical diasporic people is the same God who is with the immigrants of today.

*Methodism’s connectional structure* also emerged as a theme. The relevance of this particular cultural theme is mainly applicable to the United Methodist Church context. I have included this point because of how it significantly relates to the formation of the cultural and religious identity of the participants.

In Level 1 especially in the second group, the participants appreciated how global and connectional Methodism is—sharing the same tradition and structure. This connectionalism is also one of the reasons why in going to a Methodist church here in the United States, the participants were not expecting to experience much difference from the Methodist church they left at home. Most explained also how they were not disappointed with their expectation that the Methodist churches here are warm in welcoming them and generous in helping them with their needs—especially after knowing that they are also Methodists in the country from which came. In the Level 2 session, the group affirmed the truth of this experience. Once again, they expressed their pleasure of joining a church that greatly shares the same beliefs and organizations with their church back home. When

in church, they easily feel at home because of familiarity with the worship mode and various activities. It is important to the participants that they are part of a religious organization that is similar to what they left back home.

A biblical depiction of connectionalism is reflected in the life of the early church, as noted in the Book of Acts and in the Pauline and General Epistles. In Acts, Luke narrates how the church started to be scattered: “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4, NIV). Thus, the early church commenced an extensive scale and period of migration. Later on, James writes to the dispersed church (especially the believing Jews), encouraging them to be strong in facing trials and persecutions in diaspora life (Jas. 1:1-4). In many passages in the Pauline Epistles, the connectional relation of the church is also demonstrated. An example is narrated in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, encouraging them to give for the sake of fellow believers in other places who need financial aid, through the example shown by the Macedonian church (2 Corinthians 8:1-6). Luke also reported how Paul coordinated a relief effort through the Antioch church for the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30). The connectional structure of the early church is helpful to link believers who are separated by distance, especially those who have been dispersed to other regions. Similarly, this connectional organization of the UMC is helpful to the participants who need a sense of familiarity in the midst of all the strangeness in a foreign land. Furthermore, the connectional structure helps maintain their relational and spiritual connection to their home church in the Philippines.



### Comparative Analysis

Part of the goal of Level 2 was to engage in a comparative analysis between the two research groups. I have identified significant factors that determined why the first group of participants chose an all-Filipino church while the second group preferred a multiethnic church. I have also been intentional in identifying the various contributions of these choices to their personal worldview and cultural identity. The following are points where the two groups exhibit dissimilarities. In this section, I do not discuss the issues of resemblance mainly because those are already reflected in the explanation of the fourteen themes. For the most part, the similarities show the basic condition and spiritual needs of Filipino immigrants whether they are in an all-Filipino faith community or in a multicultural setting.

The leading position of contrast between the two groups is also a factor why they are in their current respective church membership: The contrast is that one group wants to connect with their *kababayan* more and the other group wants to encounter people from other cultures. Being in a multicultural society, the multiethnic group emphasized the importance of seizing every opportunity to encounter and learn from people of other cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, they also argued that one of the evidences that a church outreach is creating an impact is if its members reflect the racial composition of its community.

The Filipino group, on the other hand, raised the need of belonging to a faith community where they can connect with people of the same cultural and spiritual background. There is deeper experience of fellowship in a church where members are of the same worldview, language and practice. Furthermore, most of the participants

believed that their God-given mission is to reach out to Filipinos who experience the same diaspora struggles that they are experiencing.

Another point of contrast is between the multiethnic group's drive to reach out to people of all races and the Filipino group's mindset to focus all mission efforts to Filipinos only. As indicated in the Data Needed section, some of the participants from the Filipino church have pointed out to the effectiveness of applying the homogenous unit principle in their evangelistic campaigns. They simply attract and meet the felt needs of people who are like them—Filipino immigrants. This system does not mean that they do not accommodate people from other racial background. In fact, they have some non-Filipino constituents because some of their members have interracial marriages. In general however, their mission statement is directed to reaching out the Filipino immigrants only.

The racial composition of the multiethnic group on the other hand reflects their purpose of reaching out to all races of people in their community. They uphold that one fundamental characteristic of a local church, if it is to be evangelistic, is racial inclusivism. This characteristic is one of the underlying reasons why the Filipinos in this church choose a multiethnic church instead of being in an all-Filipino congregation. They believe that being racially inclusive is being faithful to the mandate of spreading the gospel to everyone. Furthermore, they believe that their multiethnic fellowship is their main witness to societies that are still divided by racial differences. They testify that racial unity is possible in Christ who *has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility* (Eph. 2:14). They consider it a great privilege to be part of a community that

upholds racial unity as a living testimony—something that a monocultural church is not able to provide.

Another point of comparison is between the expressions of Filipino culture in worship versus worship that respects similarities of many cultural traditions. The group from the Filipino congregation expressed their pleasure of seeing how their cultural practices are being employed as means to express worship. They believe that when elements of a diaspora community's culture are employed in worship, they meet the emotional needs of the community in a way that conventional liturgy will not be able to carry out. Worship becomes both therapeutic and relevant. It is therapeutic because it symbolically transports the homesick worshippers to a state of being at home. It is relevant because it significantly ushers the community through music, language, symbols, and stories that are deeply meaningful to them.

The group from the multiethnic church views worship differently. Being mostly Methodists from their homeland, they respect the main elements of a Methodist liturgy, which can be considered as globally accepted. Thus, they arranged their order of worship with components that transcend their cultural preferences, creating a pattern that is acceptable to all. To opt for this worship arrangement, everyone needs to come to the middle ground and slightly compromise their culturally conceived worship methods. This compromise does not appear to bother the participants. For them, their main statement as a church is not their respective cultural differences but their commonality in spite of their differences, and there is no occasion where this truth is better expressed than in public worship.

The negation versus toleration of Filipino negative culture was also brought up. The distinctive characteristics of the churches that the groups represent create a very interesting contrast between them that specifically concerns some of the negative cultures in the Philippines. Examples of negative Filipino cultural traits that are brought in diaspora life are crab mentality, regionalism, over sensitivity, division, and a colonial mindset. In an all-Filipino church setting, negative traits are somewhat cultivated along with the preservation of the good culture. One reason can be attributed to a sense of over familiarity with fellow Filipinos' cultural background and social behavior, so that there is little room for respect to one another. This behavior can also be connected to an attitude of stereotyping fellow Filipinos negatively, resulting in a feeling of mistrust against each other. Another factor that can be related to a common response immigrants have is a sense of insecurity and identity crises due to the lost of professional status or being away from family. The tendency during this condition is for these immigrants to reclaim those things that they lost by reenacting their previous respectable position that they had before their migration. Because immigrants cannot project this ambition in the larger society where there are social boundaries that cannot be crossed, they will try to regain their superior pose with a community of fellow Filipinos.

In the church of the second group, however, because members emphasize on the setting outside of everyone's cultural preferences in order to rally on the middle ground, even the negative elements of each cultural group go uncultivated. Secondly, because of so many cultural diversities, people tend to create a larger space for understanding the unfamiliar actions, decisions, customs and terminologies of one another.

### Data Analysis—Impact Level

The initial drafting of a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology is also realized in this level. Due to the participants' unavailability nonetheless, I was forced to process the third level in a different way. Instead of a focus group session, I sent a follow-up questionnaire to each of the participants and asked for their comments, corrections, and reflections (see the questionnaire in Appendix I). The points they shared are also reflected in this section of the data analysis.

Before analyzing the different impacts of a contextualized theology, I finalized the various points that emerged as encapsulated symbols that represent the history, social conditions, spirituality and culture of Filipino immigrants in the framework of contextual theology. Most of these points already have appeared in the Interpretation Level but only as raw data directly taken from the participant observation focus groups and interviews. In this section I have further sharpened these items and allowed them to interact with other information I gathered from history, demography, and various fields of study that deal more profoundly with the various subjects interleaved in the main topic.

### Theological Motif

I used the principles of theological motifs as a guide in drawing insights and constructing the arguments. I took the meaning extracted from the parallelism between the cultural themes and scriptural texts that I have identified in the interpretation level and allowed it to correlate with the main theological motifs. These theological motifs served as a framework that guided the construction of a contextual theology patterned after scriptural standards. I used some of the principles Luis Pantoja uses in constructing theological motifs in his own version and formulation of a Filipino diaspora theology.

Due to the distinction of context and purpose, however, I have revised some points to make it pertinent to my own research focus. Furthermore, the discussions of these theological motifs are limited to how they relate to the theme of this study—diaspora identity. Four theological motifs guided the final phase of the contextualization process.

The first one is God. One of the commonly attributed doctrines of the Christian faith is the Trinity. The Trinity signifies the unity of the Godhead in the three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In relation to the theme of this study, the scriptural depiction of God's trinitarian nature expresses God's perfect relational character. The triad relationship reflects God's faultless oneness in character, nature, and purpose in spite of three distinctive persons. This theological notion has given birth to social reflections on the Trinity where the Trinitarian concept becomes a model for theologizing on social concepts. The doctrine of the Trinity reflects a vision of harmony for the whole human community. The Triune God expresses God's longing to inspire the church to reach that echelon of unity that expresses his own being. Lastly, God's relational being envisions the creation of diverse societies that are formed by intermigration of various people groups, thus upholding unity while constructing ethnic plurality.

Another relevant attribute of God in this study is God being the Creator. God as Creator describes God's omnipotent and omniscient nature from whom all things have originated and were constructed. It depicts the preexistent Supreme architect of all existence. In the Genesis account of creation, God made humans stewards of all creation and commanded them to populate the earth. Relating this truth with relocation phenomenon, Pantoja argues:

Although God is the ultimate owner of all things as creator, this created earth is God's provision not for one specific group of people or nation but

to mankind in general as an entitlement.... The rest of the earth is freely available to all mankind to conquer, to develop and to own. In general, theological statements on creation affirm the preceding but the nuances of migration and immigration become especially relevant in the context of a theology of diaspora. (2004a:80)

Thus, it is important in the formulation of a theology on diaspora, that the process is done in relation to creation-centered theology where inclusive stewardship and privileges are more underlined than the synthetic rules and borders humanity has created to segregate each other.

The second theological motif is humanity. One theme under the theology of humanity that is very relevant to my study is identity. God has created and bestowed on each human being the status of individuality in the context of community. This uniqueness is innately defined—as in one's genetic make up—and is shaped by national boundary, sociopolitical setting, and cultural construct. Specifically, the topic that closely relates to my study is cultural identity. God, in various parts of the Scriptures have used the cultural identity and worldview of a person or a people to reveal Himself and to accomplish God's plans. Consequently, one's faith, worship and witness are inseparable from a person's cultural location. Thus, whether one's cultural identity is hybrid or (claimed as) authentic, God has recognizes their importance as a channel of His will and as a definition of one's worth. This theological point is in balance with the principle of unity of the whole human community, as discussed earlier. Despite a cultural group's own particularity and sovereignty, the ultimate design is still the fundamental unity of humanity in God's eschatological design of fulfilling the consummation of the kingdom agenda.

Another topic under humanity is sin. Specifically, the theology of sin relates with this study in terms of how humanity's willful disregard of God results in the formation of various social diseases that contaminate the divine design of peace and harmony. Pantoja argues that even if "cultures developed and civilizations flourished,... [T]hey also competed to establish one's superiority over the others, thus the racial and ethnic disparities prevailing in societies" (2004a:82). In relation to the diaspora phenomenon, and particularly Filipino migration, he further writes, "Cultural jealousy and ethnic superiority claims migration and acculturation more difficult but not insurmountable as proven by the progressive lives of the Filipino diaspora in their chosen adopted homeland" (2002:82). Thus, the framework of the theology of sin can illuminate insights as to how the diaspora theology can effectively address the negative elements of diaspora culture.

The third theological motif is the person and work of Jesus Christ. The theology of incarnation can be considered the grandest story of relocation. The Son of God crossed the border that separates divinity from humanity and lived as an "alien," spiritually and literally speaking. Spiritually, alien gives reference to his incarnated status from being "non-earthling" to living as "earthling" (using science-fiction terminology). Literally, it refers to part of his earthly life when he, together with his parents, became refugees in Egypt. In response to proposed laws that tend to criminalize illegal immigrants, the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference (GNJUMC) gave a response through its official newsletter called "United Methodist Relay." Making an analogy between today's immigrants and Jesus, written on the back page of its May 2006 volume are the following words:



Jesus was a refugee and an immigrant. He was born in a barn, in a town far from his home because the government had ordered a census to be taken. His family had to flee to a foreign country, because their lives were in jeopardy if they stayed in their homeland. (Webber 2006:9)

Secondly, Jesus possessed a “hybrid DNA” having the unique and only characteristic of being God-Man—complete God and complete man. He reflects the complexity of identity faced by immigrants throughout history—dualism, biculturalism, hybridity, and the like.

The fourth theological motif is the church. Many elements of ecclesiological thoughts greatly relate with diaspora theology. For one, the history of the expansion of the church demonstrates largely the inevitability of relocation as an integral part of its identity, growth and nature. The parallelism of relocation experiences between the church and current immigrant communities can be taken as more than an analogy to the extent that the church itself can be considered as one of the diaspora communities. Emphasizing this thought, Pantoja argues:

What we have asserted as God’s original creative design that motivates mankind to become adventurous wanderers and explorers finds a counterpart with the new creation of people whose mobility instincts are infused with and used for spiritual and missiological ends.... Although the church had its beginning in Jerusalem, it was not intended to be identified with that city or with Israel as a nation. The gravitational power center shifts and the perspectives of the greater number of adherents prevail. (2004a:84-85)

Thus, the ecclesiological themes that greatly relate to the subject of my study centered more on the aspect of mission where the church is the journeying mission agent that transcends cultural, political, and social borders. The diaspora characteristics that the church possesses have played an important role in providing theological insights in the construction of the contextual theology in this study. Some ecclesiological elements have

also addressed those cultural expressions that require transformation instead of readily employing them as cultural themes.

### The Main Points of a Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology

In itemizing the main themes of the constructed diaspora theology, I used the actual terminologies from the classification of the cultural themes. More than the goal of simplifying it, my intention is for the intended main readers (Filipino immigrants) to grasp the meaning of every point easily.

The following are the fourteen themes that together comprise a contextual theology on Filipino diaspora identities.

#### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Spirituality

One of the most significant themes that have emerged during the focus groups is the theme of spirituality. Also, in the questionnaire I sent, I asked the participants to rank the 14 cultural themes from least important to the most important in diaspora life. Four of the participants ranked it as first and 6 ranked it as second. The rest also ranked it in the high category. (See Appendix J, Summary of the Participants' Answer to the Follow-Up Questionnaire). This implies how significant spirituality is in the formation of Filipino diaspora identity.

Nonetheless, this principle does not in anyway imply lesser spirituality of these persons in the Philippines. On the contrary, Filipinos in general are regarded as religious even prior to the current era of migration. In fact, even before their colonizers brought Christianity, Filipinos possessed a spiritual worldview construct and a structured form of religious rituals and practices. Some sociologists even argue that current Filipino

religiosity is rooted more in their premagellanic worldview than in the “religious package” brought by Western missionaries.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Filipino diaspora spirituality is unique in two ways. First, it is different from Western Christianity. Because of its unique character, rooted in its distinctive formation in Philippine history and society, this spirituality is kept concealed by many in fear that the immigrant who practices it will be branded as eccentric. The continued existence of this religious worldview in the consciousness of the Filipino immigrants has further emphasized their high regard for its value. Despite many other alterations and deconstructions they went through in order to assimilate, they still hold on to their spiritual consciousness.

Filipinos’ spirituality exhibits deviation from Western religious worldview. For example, Filipinos view “sin in terms of social consequences.” Palugod explains that for Filipinos:

The gravest sin is greed and the lack of compassion. Their opposite—kindness, generosity and hospitality are extolled and rewarded. This relational and exteriorized understanding of sin appears to have been effective in keeping social order and harmony. (Palugod 1988:124)

For this reason, spirituality for Filipinos is inseparable from being in community harmoniously. In the same way, religiosity for them is not privatized but always finds meaning in a religious community. This worldview is incompatible with the way many

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<sup>20</sup> These cultural traits, according to historians are not completely eradicated by missionaries; rather they crept in and found their pose in what they call, “Folk Christianity.” Rodney Henry explains, “Folk Catholicism is the coexistences of two religions in the same person without inconsistencies. The Roman Catholic aspect of folk Catholicism deals with higher of the ultimate concerns, while the animistic aspect deals with the concerns of everyday living” (1986:11). He adds that even in their conversion to Protestantism, “such a conversion changes the belief system of the Filipinos only at the level of ultimate concerns, and not at the animistic level (16). Even if some of these indigenous elements are scripturally problematic, many of them are not and are useful to theologize on Filipino identity. They are, however, contrary to some Western paradigms.

Western Christians claim their practice of spirituality without the need for community. According to Thelma Burgonio Watson, “A spiritual value that is common to most, if not all, Filipinos is the value of community life.... You orient your actions to the needs and betterment of the collective” (1997:328). In diaspora life, she further asserts that “[i]t is a spiritual value to seek your own community for support and nurture. After all, we are in a strange land and a different culture” (1997:329). Thus, by building spiritual communities with fellow Filipinos, their unique indigenous spirituality is preserved and frequently experienced.

Secondly, Filipino diaspora spirituality is unique because it exhibit points of difference from homeland spirituality. Due to various influential factors in the migration experience, the spirituality brought by Filipino immigrants has evolved in directions suitable for their migration life. First, while keeping their native ways, Filipinos have also acclimatized to the religious framework of their host. For example, it is not surprising to visit a Filipino church and experience either an adaptation of classical European liturgy or a thoroughly modernized musical production—both Western influenced. Moreover, many Filipino churches are also known for celebrating the special Sundays celebrated by American churches such as Memorial Sunday, Independence Sunday, Thanksgiving Sunday—all having no direct historical relevance to them as immigrants. They need to make these important adaptations so that their worship gatherings will be inclusive of their community and sensitive to their more Americanized children.

Another reason why Filipino immigrants’ spirituality is different from their homeland’s is because it evolved as a response to the unique challenges faced by immigrants—challenges that obviously do not exist in their homeland. The deviation is

necessary so that their belief system will be responsive and still functional in immigrant life. Thus, the distinctive setting of diaspora life creates new forms of spirituality and instigates fresh spiritual passion in an immigrant's faith. Sadly, on many occasions, negative factors are the instigator of such positive creation. Burgonio-Watson, reflecting from personal experiences, explains:

Nowhere is one's spirituality tested more than in the situation of being an immigrant in this country, especially a new immigrant trying to make sense of a life that has been uprooted and disconnected from that which is familiar, nurturing, and accepting.... In coping with the challenges of always looking like a foreigner or alien, I find my spiritual resources affirming and undergirding. (1997:326)

The testimony of the participants in this study reflects this statement. The formation of diaspora spirituality out of challenging circumstances does not justify such systemic evils that create oppressive settings for immigrants. Filipino diaspora spirituality can instead be seen as an expression of resistance to the oppressive tools of alteration by creating new forms of consciousness and religious identity.

A Filipino diasporic theology of spirituality reflects elements of Filipino indigenous religiosity, qualities that evolved in the process of adapting Western forms and rituals and a spiritual consciousness that is being formed as a response to the complexities embedded in migration life. The church, being the agent of mission and spiritual nourishment, reflects on these experiences and allow the Scriptures to respond to these needs. This theology also expresses God as the one who reveals his will and character in ways that are understandable in the spiritual formation of a certain diaspora church. The church in turn is moved by the Spirit to reach out and exhibit a spiritual practice that is meaningful and pertinent to the lives of people of the same cultural background.

Other specific facets of this spirituality are interwoven in the other theologies discussed below.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Two Homes

As explained earlier, a worldview of two homes is the positive perspective of adapting and experiencing two homes and two cultures as opposed to having a sense of homelessness—a feeling of losing the old and an inability to adapt to the host’s culture.

The worldview of two homes reflects a perspective of balance. It occurs when an immigrant comes to a point of accepting the inevitability of adapting a bicultural pose. It is overcoming the psychological trauma of being lost or being homeless, finding shelter in the principles and lifestyle of hybridity. In Smith-Christopher’s opinion, this worldview “does not see mobility as pathological, but rather embraces the new realities of transnational identities or celebrates the emergence of global hybrids” (2002:17). In the same way, Segovia in describing the benefit of biculturalism argues, “instead of no home, no voice and no face, it argues for two homes, two voices and two faces. Such otherness also holds, that all reality—all homes, all voices, and all faces—is construction and as such, has both contextuality and perspective” (1995:322). In other words, the worldview of two homes is a state of finally discovering the gift that migration has long been offering—the privilege of having two identities. This worldview does not entail a compulsory conduct but a condition of illumination and resolution. This way of life does not, however, come without a struggle. Alfredo Munoz, describes the various dynamics of biculturalism in Filipino immigrants:

He finds himself a synthesis: workable, malleable and possible—a product of two worlds. He is American when it comes to will-power and energy. He is Filipino when it comes to temperament and sentiments. The American in him will make him want to do things by himself; the Filipino

will make him want to help, and be helped, in the true spirit of *bayanihan*.  
(Munoz 1971:161)

When a Filipino immigrant discovers the possibility and learns the balance of two homes, he becomes a model to other group of immigrants that are still in a “homeless” stage. Theologically, the perspective of two homes sees a God who does not confine a person’s identity within the border defined by birth, but allows innovation and integration to produce a “new creation”—a hybrid having two residences. Secondly, this theology reflects a God who even though respects transformation through migration, values the preservation of one’s ethnic identity formed in one’s homeland. This theology celebrates a prominent biblical characteristic—rootedness. In this context, one’s rootedness is based on one’s devotion to his or her homeland.

The concept of homeland is not confined in geographical definition. Rather, the preservation of one’s original home can also be done by bringing the homeland to the new home. Using the metaphor of a turtle in describing this method, Yen Le Espiritu emphasizes that “many immigrants anchor themselves by carrying home on their backs” (2003:9). Further emphasizing this concept in the context of Filipino migration, she adds, “Responding to their enforced homelessness in the United States, many Filipino migrants have created a sense of home by memorializing the homeland, inventing traditions, and fortifying familial and hometown bonds” (2003:214).

Finally, the theology of two homes reflects a God who journeys with the “homeless” immigrant until they realized that they cannot live in one home anymore. The God of diaspora guides them to learn the balance and harmony of assimilation and preservation. In Daniel’s story, the same God who was with the “faithful Daniel” is the

same God who blessed the gradually “transforming Belteshazzar” (Daniel’s Babylonian name; Dan. 1:7).

Putting this notion in a postcolonial perspective, hybridity is considered in postcolonial theory as a trait of a colonized or previously colonized people. Just like the case of Filipinos, a postcolonial community tends to develop an ability to imitate the invaders’ cultural ways. This ability is developed as a coping mechanism to survive the cruelty of the empire. This process does not imply that the natives decrease their identity but they only include the foreign ways to their well intact cultural framework. Furthermore, to imitate the invader is considered a form of mockery or contempt. In postcolonial study, this ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is called mimicry. According to Bill Ashcroft:

When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to “mimic” the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a “blurred copy” of the colonizer that can be quite threatening. This is because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2000:139)

Even if mimicry is largely the result of imperial policy, the colonized takes this agenda and uses it to express the inevitability of their distinction. This attitude is mostly true in the case of Filipino immigrants in the United States. The creation of a Filipino American identity is a combination of clever mimicry, loyalty to identity, and an expression of resistance to policies that demands unreasonable assimilation.

Having two homes in diaspora life is a postcolonial pose because it is an expression of struggle against colonial credence of cultural superiority. Putting it in theological perspective, the creation of two homes, which implies the creation of a new



cultural identity, reflects that the creation work of God commonly starts with the underprivileged and the displaced. Furthermore, it also deconstructs the hierarchy of cultures and substitutes a setup that reflects equality and the coexistence of two different cultural identities.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Adaptability

The previous chapters emphasized how most Filipino immigrants demonstrate an exceptional ability to adapt to a pluralistic environment such as is found in the United States. Compared to other Asian groups such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, Filipinos are more willing to assimilate to a multicultural situation than to form an isolated monocultural assembly. This distinctive capability to adapt is frequently attributed to factors such as the Philippines' centuries of Western colonization, current westernization, and Filipinos' pre-immigration learning with principles of adaptation in their dealing with their own regional diversity.

A Filipino American diaspora theology of adaptability to multiethnicity reflects a society that is rapidly becoming pluralistic, in which Filipinos are one of the major determinants. It further reflects the remarkable transition of modernity's hegemonic monocultural nation-state to a borderless interaction and recreation of multicultural societies through the unimpeded phenomenon of migration. A new immigrant in coming to the United States discovers "that there is no longer just one America that newcomers enter nor only one American identity that they may adopt. Newcomers encounter a pluralistic social context rich with types and categories to which they may be assigned" (Warner 1998:18).

On this account, diaspora theology reflects a God at work through the same Spirit at work during Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out in a multicultural setting, in celebrating diversity in the pluralistic terrain of American society. Making a comparative theological reading between Babel and Pentecost in the context of Asian Americans in the United States, Eleazar Fernandez points out, “Yahweh’s project [Pentecost] is directed against the univocal linguistic code of the Babylonian Empire, a code of centralized power and control” (2002:33). He adds, “Pentecost event does not portray the presence of various languages as an event of confusion, but a new sense of communal experience and the possibility of rich communication amidst cultural and racial differences” (2002:44). Thus, this theology reflects on the presence of multiculturalism in the United States and recognizes the need for its residents to be “filled with the Spirit of Pentecost.”

Furthermore, this diaspora theology calls for the willingness of the members of this society to employ symbols and dialects that are comprehensible to the “other” so that each small community can be affirmed. In order for mutual comprehensibility to happen, members of this multicultural community must be willing to build bridges of assimilation. Providentially, this is where the Filipino immigrants come in because this theology also recognizes Filipinos’ demonstrated ability in adapting to a multiethnic society. This ability is attributed to Filipinos’ centuries of subjugation, current westernization, and its own regional diversity. Munoz explicates that these factors all contributed to a multi-Filipino-self. He describes the Filipino saying, “While avowedly brown, he is also consciously white, yellow, black and red. He is by marriage, adoption, religion, customs, education a living habits all races” (1971:157). Because of Filipinos

own diverse selves, they are more able in creating relationships with people of other races. Munoz adds:

He is at home with himself or with anyone. He can get by and in cases, go through. He can relate to any class of people or to almost any ethnic and racial group. He can speak at least three languages, plus five to ten Philippine dialects. He knows as much of U.S. history, geography, politics, the arts and sciences as the average American. (1971:157)

Another way of explaining Filipinos' developed adaptability is through a psychological analysis of their personality. One well-recognized study is known as the Filipinos'

Smooth Interpersonal Relationship (SIR), defined as follows:

[The] facility of getting along with each other in such a way as to avoid outward signs of conflict,... it means being agreeable even under difficult circumstances,... a sensitivity to what other people feel at any given moment, and a willingness and ability to change track (if not direction) to catch the lightest favoring breeze. (Church 1973:30)<sup>21</sup>

In short, Filipinos tend to be pleasant, secretive, and non-confrontational in relationships.

For a firm preservation of much-valued relationships, convictions easily yield to

*pakikisama*,<sup>22</sup> truthfulness clothed in euphemism, and the traditional recourse to a

*padrino* system (a go-between) in handling conflicts, in expressing annoyance or in

seeking favor. In diaspora context, this personality tends to ease tensions and promotes

harmony within a community that otherwise is likely to exhibit each one's cultural eccentricity.

Finally, this diaspora theology recognizes the diversity of components in Filipinos and the potential of that "gift" not just for successful assimilation but to be an instrument of promoting mutual acceptance and interconnection. It identifies the potential of

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<sup>21</sup> Timothy Church quotes Father Lynch, "Perspectives on Filipino Clannishness," *Philippine Sociological Review*, 21(1) (1973): 73-77.

<sup>22</sup> Enriquez defined *pakikisama* as "yielding to the leader or majority; companionship; esteem; "alter-fellow" (160).

Filipinos to model a needed willingness for other immigrant communities to learn and experience another's "otherness." Discussing specific evangelistic potentials, Henry Tan suggests that "somehow the Lord has especially blessed the Filipino. Filipinos are generally friendly, flexible, adaptable, gifted with music and have the ability to learn languages quickly.... The very make-up of the Filipino people lends to their becoming effective 'fishers of men'" (Tan 2002:174). Thus, diaspora theology does not just meet the need of theologizing the identity of Filipino Americans; it also motivates their potential as crosscultural missionaries.

#### The Filipino Diaspora Theology of *Damayan*

Filipino immigrants who reside in one particular area are usually drawn together to form a community. The forming of this community is motivated by "a longing to re-create that sense of barrio community where people know each other, speak the same dialect, share customs, and come from the same ethnic region" (Burgonio-Watson 1997:328). Foremost to its goal is to create an environment of mutual moral support and financial assistance. This attitude is known to many Filipinos as *damayan* (sharing).

*Damayan* theology illustrates the lifestyle of mutual sharing and communal economy that the early church demonstrated. It is exhibited in the life of the dispersed believers as narrated in various New Testament epistles. The *damayan* lifestyle reflects one of God's ultimate designs of creating a spiritual community that mirrors the utmost manifestation of God's love exhibited through the redemptive work of Christ. This purpose was effectively fulfilled in the dispersion and relocation experience of the church. By implication, the difficulties embedded in migration life have helped in the formation of a new holy people that have modeled how the *damayan* way of life can be a

sanctuary for survival and growth. Furthermore, *damayan* theology reflects Paul's ecclesiological depiction of the believers as a human body. This metaphorical description carries principles of egalitarianism that has threatened those who uphold hierarchical structures. The church, functioning as well-synchronized body parts, has defeated divisive social barriers by practicing *damayan* especially in difficult times.

In the same way, Filipino diaspora theology of *damayan* is a reflection of the lifestyle Filipinos have demonstrated as an immigrant community. It presents the manifestation of God's compassion through an immigrant people who are willing to give up social and regional statuses for the sake of communal survival. It articulates how adversities can be instrumental of uniting a diaspora people that may have otherwise been alienated in their homeland. *Damayan* theology conveys a God whose presence and character abides in a community, which evidence is demonstrated by the members' mutual sharing. Lastly, diaspora theology on *damayan* reflects the mission work of God through a faith community by making them a model of *damayan* to non-church people.

#### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Connection to Homeland

Connection to homeland does not mean being unwillingly bound to it. On the contrary, God values the phenomenon of migration as an event that accomplishes his purposes. For one, migration contributes to creating systems of interconnection that ushers harmony among nations. As much as interconnection is important, the Scriptures also affirm the value of preserving one's connection to his or her homeland. Okamura refers to the connection that diaspora creates as *space*. In his book, *Imagining the Filipino American Diaspora*, he writes, "The notion of space as a site of the Filipino American diaspora refers to the relations between Filipino Americans and the Philippine homeland

and also to the relations between the Filipino American and other diasporic communities” (1998:103). One of the main thoughts he emphasizes in his work is that Filipinos in diaspora should engage in linkages with their homeland, and with other diaspora counterpart in other countries, through transnational relations and by learning and expressing the cultural makeup of Filipinos. Arguing along this line, Espiritu argues that “many immigrants look to the Philippines for compensation and protection, producing and maintaining multiple layers of transnational social connections in the process” (Espiritu 2003:212).

Individually, connection to homeland helps the immigrants to feel a sense of comfort, belongingness, and identity. The imagination and memories of the homeland provide them a sense of stability for them not to plummet into the lure of total assimilation. Many diaspora characters in the Old Testament have been portrayed as people who yearn to return to their homeland. This strong emotional attachment makes them psychologically capable to resist the snare of entirely forgetting their ethnic identity. Diaspora theology of connection reflects this strength and resolve to still be recognized by the host country as people of the Far East.

Socially, connection to homeland makes a strong immigrant community. Consistent ways of connection to their homeland preserve their common history, cultural traits, dialect, and common social interest, which, in turn, create for them a stronger bond of unity. Without the regular contact with their home, an immigrant community can gradually lose their commonality and points of identical concerns with each other. Antonio Pido, discussing along this line argues, “The loyalty of the Pilipino to the Philippines is based primarily on the cultural heritage rather than the nation state”

(1986:123). This loyalty is evident in the preservation of their cultural identity, which is regularly enriched by their consistent connection to people back home.

Connection to homeland also reflects Filipinos' deep concern for their less fortunate *kababayan*; thus, connection is also visible through various means of *padala* (financial support). In the question asking to which biblical immigrants they relate with, seven of the respondents answered Nehemiah (See Appendix J). The reason obviously revolves around Nehemiah's passionate care for his homeland. In the same way, *padala* has been a way of life lived by many Filipinos.

One of the reasons why Filipinos' philanthropic connection is strong is because they are indebted to families, friends, and barrios. Indebtedness is a strong cultural principle in the Philippines that not even migration can wipe away. Indebtedness is not a condition of bondage where one is forced to do something reluctantly, rather, *utang na loob* or indebtedness is a Filipino cultural perspective that reflects Filipinos' high regard of their familial roots and their grateful recognition of their responsibility to return the favor. A famous *Tagalog* proverb reflects this saying: "*Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan* [They who won't look back from where they came will not reach their destination]." Indebtedness is one of the cords that keep the Filipino immigrant and their home connected.

Connection to homeland theology reflects God's primordial intent to preserve a people's cultural identity with ways that transcend borders and distances. One's ethnic self can prevail in spite of the physical absence from home because of the emotional, social and spiritual connections that exists between the immigrant and the motherland. These connections are meant to survive separation. More than the role played by

transnational physical structures, the emotional connections seems to be the strongest cord that Filipino immigrants have. Filipino immigrants are emotionally attached to their home partly because of the sad memories they have of their colonial history and the current drama of their homeland's economic hardship. Furthermore, because of Filipinos' strong familial ties it is harder for immigrants to forget home. Through this connection, transnational systems are being created to quench the longing of the immigrant for home and to create easier avenues for the monetary support to reach the homeland. God, in turn, uses this connection as providence to homeland Filipinos as the immigrants send dollars home. During the study of the Nehemiah story, the participants correlate the practice of sending financial support to the Philippines as a form of Nehemiah ministry due to how the story reflects the same intention of rebuilding the economic wall of a nation. The participants in this study see their Nehemiah ministry as their God-designed mission calling to their homeland.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Courage

One of the well-known Filipino attributes is *katapangan* or courage. *Katapangan* is usually a tangible expression of one's *Lakas ng loob* (inner strength). In migration context, this characteristic is further formed by the crises embedded in diaspora life. Courage can be seen as an effective tool of an outsider to survive and eventually assimilate in his or her new home. In other words, courage is a survival value that is developed in the life of an immigrant and paradoxically aided by factors that makes migration complicated and wearisome.

Generally, Filipinos express *katapangan* in two ways. First is by adapting an outspoken behavior so as to convey their minds in a society that carries out an intense and



forceful way of interaction. Being tough is one of the traits some Filipinos choose to become—a price of assimilation. Second is by maintaining a resilient and enduring attitude in the midst of conflicts and pressures. *Katapangan* can be viewed here as endurance more than forcefulness. Filipinos stay in the struggle until they learn to adapt to their new environment or their environment learns to accept them. Whatever the case may be, Filipino immigrants are determined to stay and call the United States home. The courage lies in the common denominator to stay and acclimatize.

Theologically, *katapangan* can be seen as a work of God in the life of a struggling community to be incorporated into a society that generally perceives them as inferiors and outsiders. To be courageous is to be inwardly empowered by seeing God at work in favor of the outcast. *Katapangan* in context of Filipino consciousness is a result of their confidence in divine providence at work on their behalf. Filipinos in general are regarded as religious people and this religiosity can be inferred as the source of their inner strength.

#### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Cultural Preservation

One of the most significant cultural themes that emerged is the attitude of the participants to conserve some of their homeland cultural traits and perspectives. As explained in previous sections, this way of preservation does not imply that they still uphold the belief that they can maintain a fixed and unchanging identity. On the contrary, they realized that reducing the tension of their identity crisis means that they should face the inevitability of their changing cultural identity. Accepting this change while at the same maintaining a sense of stability—with characteristics that distinguish who they are from others—is imperative cure. Preservation in this context means two things. First, it

refers to their distinction from others due to the combination of traits they adopted and traits they kept. Second, it specifically refers to their resolve of retaining the positive and beneficial cultural traits and perspectives they have brought from their homeland. Fredrik Barth in his book, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, argues that ethnic identity is not about the fortification of enclosed cultural features but the dynamics that happen in the boundaries between ethnic groups. According to him:

If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and the ways of signaling membership and exclusion. Ethnic groups are not merely or necessarily based on the occupation of exclusive territories; and the different ways in which they are maintained, not only by a once-and-for-all recruitment but by continual expression and validation. (Barth 1969:7)

In the case of the Filipino immigrants, the boundary is situated in diasporic life and they are set between cultural groups. As Filipinos interact with other groups, the more their distinction from others is made clear. He also explains that even if some parts of the culture of an ethnic group are changed, “the fact of dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content” (Barth 1969:6).

To maintain this sense of stability and distinctiveness, Filipino diasporic communities created transnational ties, organizations, labor unions, and other Filipino social groups as mechanisms of preservation so they can practice and enrich their evolving cultural identity together. These mechanisms according to Smith “are employed by social groups in order to maintain their identity, social structure, and religious/cultural life under stress” (1989:11). In an article she wrote entitled, “My Dream is to be Able to Give Something Back to My People,” in the book *Filipino American Lives*, Luz Latus testified, “What I learned from home in the Philippines is still what I do here. I will never

lose my Filipino traits. I still believe in my heritage, my religious beliefs, my tradition and my family values” (1995:89). This testimonial essentially reflects the attitude of the research participants with regards to the conservation of their cultural identity.

Clearly, the participants used their culture as the window through which they see God more clearly and relevantly. In some parts of the discussion, it was emphasized how the gospel can only as relevant to them as it is read through their cultural mindset. Removing these cultural elements from Filipino immigrants will disrupt the way they understand the divine because these are windows through which they are able to worship and theologize.

Another theological implication of cultural preservation is the creation of diverse communities. To be swallowed up by the host culture is to do away with God’s project of developing multiethnic societies, but Filipino immigrants can only be participants of this vision if they preserve their own cultural uniqueness. They will not be able to bring up anything to the multiracial table, if they will be fragmented by the deconstruction-machinery in diaspora.

There is however a need to engage in countercultural analysis in the process of cultural preservation. The participants in this study made it clear how important it is for Filipino immigrants to be able to discern wisely what elements in their culture are morally upright and practically useful and what of these are problematic and detrimental to their quest of settling in a new land.

The importance of being aware to dissect one’s cultural identity and retain the good and forego of the bad was emphasized. Scriptural responsibility in the process of theologizing makes this kind of dissection possible. Through the guidance of the

Scriptures, a local church will be directed to seek transformation in aspects of their culture that is contradictory to faith and scriptural principles.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Morality

According to the participants, morality is one of the most apparent factors that distinguish Filipino immigrants from many Americans. Most Filipinos pride themselves on their conservative moral principles and standards. This strong moral posture is well rooted in their religious worldview. Known to many as the only Christian nation in Asia, most Filipinos are influenced by the conservative values of the Roman Catholic Church. Coming to the United States, most Filipinos go through the difficulty of adjusting to a society that upholds moral tolerance and leniency. Many believe that the moral leniency in the United States is less caused by a lack of moral definition but more due to the collapse of many communal and spiritual structures such as the church and family. Lack of communal support and accountability has seemingly resulted in the blurring of moral understanding.

In many cases, first generation Filipino immigrants are able to preserve their moral standards and pass it on to their children. In other cases, even if the parents have maintained their position, their children easily adopt a morality resembling the western lifestyle. A Filipino diaspora theology of morality thus helps in redefining a morality relevant and instructive to both the Filipino immigrant parents and their American-born children.

A Filipino diaspora theology of morality is first and foremost one that values the community as participants in determining what is morally right or wrong. As explained earlier, spirituality in the Philippines is not properly understood if defined outside the

context of community—be it the immediate family, clan, or barrio. It respects that “group-thinking” is foundational in determining what is morally acceptable and what is not. One is thus able to judge a situation or a decision through group consultation or by analyzing if an action is offensive to another person or to one’s community. This theology reflects some Pauline passages that perceive how one’s relationship with others defines one’s moral condition before God. For example, Paul in explaining how one’s freedom in eating idol-related foods can be damaging to those weak in their community, asserts:

So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall. (1 Cor. 8:11-13, NIV)

Community-based morality reflects the God who works through the guidance and wisdom of communal life. It reflects a God who is not boxed in the legalistic canon of dos and don’ts but one who operates through the love, respect, and kindness of the members of the community. This moral lifestyle only works if every member recognizes the implication of their individual actions on the life and condition of the community. This form of morality implies that the question of accountability lies in one’s responsibility towards others. As Filipino immigrants start to assimilate a different moral framework, it is important that they continue to value community as a motivation in avoiding what is morally offending and doing what is morally acceptable. This act of preserving will not only strengthen one’s conscience but it will also strengthen the Filipino diaspora community.

Filipinos' morality, being communal, is closely related to it being non-objective.

Subjectivity here does not imply partiality and disorderliness. Feorillo Demetrio, III, a Filipino philosophy professor, writes:

A crux springs up at this juncture: does moral non-objectivism mean unbridled subjectivism for the Filipino? A further reflection will show us that Filipino morality is not at all a subjectivist morality. Though it is non-objective, its subjectivity is rooted not on a right-oriented individualism but on a duty-centered communitarianism, which in return is anchored on his harmonizing world-view. (2001:1)

Filipinos' nonlinear notions of morality reflect Jesus' attitude towards the religious legalism of his critics during His earthly ministry. He bluntly condemns the absurdity and slavery embedded in the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees and offered the alternative of a simple faith, radical compassion, and a morality based on a community that is transformed by the liberating power of the gospel. Paul further expounded this truth in many of his writings arguing of a gospel not inscribed by the letters of the law but revealed through the mysterious workings of the Spirit in the life of a community of faith.

Filipino diaspora life is characterized by community. Filipinos, like other immigrants coming to a new land immediately find an existing Filipino community or create one. If Filipino moral values are to be preserved, diaspora communities should continue thriving. Given their deep religiosity, providing them a theology on a morality based on Filipino worldview and contextualized in their diaspora life, will not only strengthen their community but will further clarify the distinctiveness of their cultural identity from other cultural groups.

#### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Respect for the Elderly

Indicated in the transcript of the focus group sessions is a fascinating fact of how the participants pointed to the attitude of respecting the elderly as the one cultural trait

they will not likely forget. According to them, this preference is mainly motivated by what they are observing as a culture of disrespect for the elderly in the American society. Most of the participants expressed their opinion that the elderly are commonly regarded as isolated, disregarded, and disrespected in the United States. This disappointment made their commitment stronger to implant in their children the Filipino cultural trait of respecting the elderly. This commitment is reflected in the follow-up questionnaire where I asked the participants specifically to rank the level of respect of their own children for the elderly. Almost all of them answered either satisfactory or excellent (See Appendix J, Summary of the Participants' Answer to the Follow-Up Questionnaire). In the space provided, most of them explained that respect for the elderly, especially for parents, is one of the uncompromisable rules in their households.

The fact that almost all of the participants chose respect for the elderly as the foremost cultural trait they will most likely not forget suggests potential implications. An example that was mentioned earlier is how this cultural trait points to their elders as the connecting link between them, their identity, their history and their homeland. I personally was surprised thinking that somehow the group will be divided by other options in the ethical or sociopolitical field, but this particular information implies how rooted respect is in the Filipino culture and how it is essential in diaspora life.

The participants also emphasized how age in the Philippine society is considered as a mark of wisdom, beauty and respect. In Filipino diaspora context, the high regard given to the elders of the community can be interpreted not just as a genuine attitude of respect for old age but as an act of preserving the connection between the diaspora community and their homeland. The elderly, for many reasons, are recognized as a

reliable link that strengthens that bond. One way this link is working is how elders can help the diaspora generation to reconnect to their identity by reconnecting to their history. Because of their first-hand experience, their presence and words are testimonies to their historical formation as a nation and as a diaspora people. The second reason can be attributed to the acquired wisdom that elders carry. Their well-formed perspective is a dependable source of insights concerning their identity as a diaspora people.

In many ways, the Scriptures validate the importance of respecting the elderly as a witness to faith and a key to transforming society. Theologically, respect for the elderly can be seen as a response to God's act of revealing his ways through the wisdom of the older members of a society. It is the acknowledgment of the power of experience in acquiring wisdom and God's method of using experience in educating and molding a people. Secondly, respect for the elderly can also be seen as an appreciation of the preciousness of life. Their old age reflects strength, stamina and purpose. Thirdly, the elderly's physical limitations and dependence can be seen as a theological reflection of humanity's frail condition and complete reliance on divine grace and providence. Taking care of the weak in the community is a humble admission of everyone in the community that they are all in some ways dependent on the intervention and provision of God to survive in diaspora life.

Lastly, respect for the elderly can be seen as God's way of preserving a people's cultural identity. Being witnesses of what God has done in the past, the elders articulate history in a way that provides insights in defining the present. In other words, the narration of what God has done in history many times clarifies the missing parts of the puzzle in defining the identity of a people group struggling due to relocation. The witness



of the elders specially benefits the American-born children of the Filipino immigrants. Elders serve as monuments to the new generation concerning the worldview, cultural practices, and religiosity developed in a people group who were battered by years of colonization and economic hardship.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Close Familial Ties

Given the place of family in Filipino American lives, Posadas notes that “household structure is a crucial component in understanding the lives of Filipino Americans” (1999:100). For example, close family ties is an important factor for survival in diaspora life. With all of the deconstruction occurring in the life of immigrants, the family structure makes them stable, secure, and sane. Dearing comments that in many Filipino American families, “distant relatives, godparents [or *ninong/ninang*], very close friends, and maids (or *yayas*) who take care of the children are also regarded as extended family” (1997:288). Because family for Filipinos include close and extended relatives, the cultural attitude of family ties provide a safe and huge haven for newly arrived Filipinos who experienced homesickness and the anxiety of assimilation. Many Filipino American families uphold that “maintaining kin bonds takes precedence over achieving individual goals, for personal identity and self-worth flow directly from familial relationships” (Posadas 1999:45).

Family is also deeply embedded in Filipino religious worldview. First, the divine is thought of as an intimate family. “The connection between man and God was understood in the classic terms of the peasant family. God was the wise father, the virgin was adored as the devoted mother and Christ was identified as the Filipino’s savior” (Steinberg 1994:75). Secondly, the household is thought of as the sacred center for

reaching out to the divine. Silliman explained, “The people (precolonial) had no fixed time or place to offer sacrifices and prayers.... No temple remains have ever been found. Most sacrifices were offered in the home” (1964:105). The case is either the *family-god* concept resulted from the value given to kinship and blood-ties or that the indigenous household worship came about due to their worldview of the familial nature of the divine. In any case, both concepts are evidently founded in basic household principle.

Household worship was gradually deemphasized when colonizers relocated the worship center to stiff temples. Religion and family were gradually compartmentalized. Converts were incited to deny their indigenous ways and, eventually, their relationship with their non-converted loved ones. In spite of this severe defamiliarization, close-family ties and the rich emphasis on kinship allegiance survived and are still customary in many regions. Furthermore, unlike some of the western depiction of Jesus as formal and elevated, the Filipino Jesus is the Christ of the *pasyon* [passion] who struggles with his people as a friend and family member. According to Eleazar Fernandez:

*Hesus* [Jesus] calls disciples *katoto* (a friend who shares one's truth), *kasalo* (a person who one eats with), *kasiping* (someone whom one sleeps with), and also *kasambahay* (someone who lives in the same house)... Life in companionship with Jesus is a practice of nonhierarchical, nonpatriarchal ways of relating and a humane way of constructing a human dwelling. (1994:101)

This religious worldview is then carried by Filipino immigrants in diaspora life. This decision is further strengthened by how the United States' society is showing a decline of family values and conventional structure, thus motivating many immigrants to continue holding on to their own. A theology that reflects Filipinos' family-tie lifestyle can provide inspiration and a sense of steadfastness founded in scriptural principles. It can both strengthen the family life and the familial worldview of Filipino immigrants.

A diaspora theology of family ties reflects the close family relationship of the triune God. It reveals God as the inventor, sustainer, and source of family life, construct, and principles. The trinity reflects a God who values family relationship as central in understanding the nature of the divine. The love and unity shared in the triune God models God's creative intention for family life. The temporary severance of God the Father and Jesus is a powerful depiction of family separation. The incarnation story is a mirror that reflects the countless family who are separated by voluntary or forced relocation. The incarnation narrative can be read as a family separation story and thus a significant component of the theological reflections of Filipino immigrants.

This theology also reflects Filipinos' christological depiction of Jesus as a *kaibigan* (friend) and *kasambahay* (family). It reveals a God who is approachable, compassionate and enduring just like a family member should be. Christ is a family member who shares with the struggles of a displaced people. He is viewed as someone who relates well with the predicaments of foreigners because he himself migrated and became an outsider in a strange world. In this theology, Christ is viewed as someone who identifies with a diasporic people not just as Savior but as a family member who is acquainted with the struggles that they experience.

Lastly, this theology speaks of the biblical concept of family as the center of spiritual formation. This concept is reflected both in the religious life of Filipino households and in many biblical passages. In the Old Testament, many Jewish feasts are celebrated in the context of households. The Feast of the Passover for example is celebrated concurrently as households and not just as a nation. In the same way, Filipino diaspora theology of family speaks of the household as the main axis of Filipinos'

religiosity. It points to the family as the initial educator and nurturer of fundamental religious beliefs. In a society where morality and spirituality is increasingly renovated, immigrants can find stability in home-based religious instructions.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of God's Providence

The participants perceived God as Provider of all that they needed to migrate. During discussion, most of them narrated how circumstances that lead to an easier process of their immigration application point to God's divine providence. This belief is in consideration of the fact that it is exceptionally difficult now to get a U.S. visa in the Philippines.

God's character as Provider is very much embedded in the religious worldview of Filipinos. This belief is rooted in the many hardships they experienced and are still experiencing, that are the result of many years of colonization and economic crash. For many Filipinos, dependence on God's intervention is a desperate and hopeful response to the impossibility of their economic condition. When politicians and social structures fail to uphold their cause, most Filipinos are inspired to put their trust in someone that transcends the hopelessness of their state.

One of the most common expressions of this worldview is in the phrase, "*bahala na*." *Bahala na* is "translated as 'let come what may,' 'never mind,' 'its up to God'" (De Mesa 1979:84). It is usually used as "an encompassing concept to characterize the so-called Filipino fatalistic attitude or resigned acceptance of his lot in his life" (1979:84). It has been claimed that *bahala na* "represents the defeatist worldview and is responsible for the difficulty of motivating Filipino to accept modernization" (1979:84). Constantino argues that *bahala na* if understood in its *locus-of-control* aspect presupposes "a

providence-oriented framework” (Constantino 1966:18), implying that motivation for *bahala na* attitude is inspired by the Eastern spirituality of divine providence. If the divine is imminent and always shares the everyday affair of humanity (as it does in the Filipino spiritual worldview), *bahala na ang Dios* (it is up to God) can be considered as the most sensible stance when the hope of the poor is already shattered by the immortal fangs of poverty. Obusan stresses,

Any ordinary Filipino attributes whatever good he experiences to God or a Transcendent Being or to the God-within-him. Expressions such as “*sa awa ng Dios* [by God’s mercy],” “*mabuti ang Dios* [God is good],” “*marunong ang Dios* [God is wise],” “*salamat sa Dios* [thank God]” shows how *bahala na* value is correlated with the principle of divine providence. (Ramirez 1997:11)

This principle is carried over to immigrant experiences, seeing God as the author, opener of doors and sustainer of Filipino immigrants in diaspora life. Filipino diaspora theology of divine providence sees God as actively involved in the condition of Filipino immigrants in ways that uphold their cause, defend their position, and supply their needs. It reflects biblical stories that narrate God’s divine interference on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalized. God’s providential role does not, however, negate Filipinos’ personal effort to work for results and earnings. On the contrary, Filipinos are considered very hardworking immigrants.

The participants’ emphasized what they believed as the main purpose of their migration: to fulfill a mission more than personal gain. Their sense of mission can include sending monetary help back home, reaching out to fellow Filipino immigrants or serving in a church. The participants have all testified of engaging in these kinds of mission one way or the other. They believed that it is God’s will that they migrated so that God can use them to fulfill certain tasks. This theology of providence reflects God’s

ultimate purpose of using those who he provides for, as channels of His will in providing for others. It reflects God's intention in biblical narratives that his definitive purpose for intervening on behalf of his people was to exhibit them as testimonies of his divine care for all nations and to enable them as channels of God's blessing to people around them. Divine providence can be seen as a reflection of God's purpose to engage in mission.

#### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Expressing Culture in Worship

This theology expresses the celebration of migration experience in worship. It sees worship gatherings as a valuable event for worshippers to meditate theologically and spiritually on who they are and who they are becoming as Filipino immigrants. Through this concept, worship gatherings can be structured in formats that allow worshippers to meditate on God's character as it applies to their social setting and evolving identity.

Moreover, this theology reflects the significance of worship as an occasion where worshippers are able to express praise and adoration in forms, symbols, and terminologies that are manifestations of their cultural traits and perspectives as a diaspora community. In a society where most church worship services are patterned and influenced by the prevailing culture, it is helpful for Filipino immigrants to know that they are still able to express worship in their own familiar and unique ways; thus, this theology upholds that a people's experiences, stories, values, practices, and ideologies are important components of a meaningful and relevant worship experience. The participants during the focus group sessions have articulated how their diaspora lives are expressed in their worship life. For them, this expression is an important part of their faith and identity formation.

### The Filipino Diaspora Theology of Struggle for Equality

This theology reflects the struggles of Filipino immigrants brought about by structures of equality. According to Enriquez, the *Tagalog* translation of struggle—*pakikibaka*—carries the notion of harmony or community. It is according to him a “level of fusion in a common struggle” (1992:72). He adds that *pakikibaka* “recognizes the meaning of cooperation and concerted action in resistance even when one is utterly powerless, which are aspects of the value of *pakikipagkapwa* [relationship with a fellow human being]” (1992:74). The mode of struggle that Filipinos carry in diaspora life is inseparable from the strength of the community. The spirit and success of Filipino immigrants’ *pakikibaka* (struggle) is based upon their communal life. In fact, their common struggle is one of the factors that draws them together and strengthens their community.

Three things under this theme emerged in the study: unfair treatment of immigrants; inability to practice their profession; and international policies that affect developing countries like the Philippines—causing massive migration.

Although in some facets, immigrants in the United States are given equal opportunity, the participants put emphasis on significant aspects that are still unfriendly to Filipino immigrants. One of them is the unfair treatment of Filipino workers. Arguing along this line, Jonathan Okamura asserts, “Filipino Americans continue to hold a politically and economically subordinate position in U.S. society which they have contested through collective resistance and advocacy especially through labor organizing and community struggles” (1998:9). These organizations have been a transitory shelter of justice and opportunity for those that have been impeded by unreasonable immigrant

laws. In support of united efforts to struggle against discrimination, Burgonio-Watson argues, “Filipino Americans need to stand together as one big community transcending linguistic, regional and religious barriers—transcending the barrio” (1997:330).

It was also highlighted in some segments of the focus group sessions how international policies create oppressive systems that repress developing countries such as the Philippines. Due to economic crisis, its people migrate to countries where they are treated inferiorly—countries that in the first place played a key role in their nation’s economic downfall. Migration, according to Pido, “is the result of relationships of inequality and dependencies maintained under colonialism or neocolonialism” (1986:117). In a study entitled, “New Inquiries into the Socioeconomic Status of Pilipino Americans in California,” Amado Cabezas, Larry Hajime Shinagawa, and Gary Kawaguchi in support of this premise point out:

The Philippines today continues to suffer from colonialism—politically independent, but economically dominated by outside interests. Thus, subordination has been a familiar experience for the immigrants, sailor or professional, educated or less educated, skilled or unskilled. This may help explain the apparently facile subordination of many Pilipino Americans today—vulnerable to an established system of structural discrimination...” (1998:151)

Writing along this line, Eleazar Fernandez, using biblical exorcism as a postcolonial metaphor, comments that Filipino Americans migrated because their homeland has been possessed by a spirit called globalization. He argues:

Globalization, both in its earliest and latest expressions, has led to the marginalization of the Philippines—economically, politically and culturally—in relation to the affluent countries of the world. With this peripheralization, it is not surprising that Filipinos often make their way into the socioeconomic centers of the world. Globalization has created a diaspora people with multiple identities and belongings who are shaped by the interweaving of the global and the local. (Fernandez 2003:95)



For Fernandez, to be dislocated for economic reason is mostly a consequence of what he explains as demon possession—an economic manipulation by elite nations through globalization. In response to this premise, he then presented a foundational solution saying that “postcolonial discourse is an attempt at exorcising colonialism” (2003:78). In essence, this diaspora contextual theology is a small contribution to the task of casting out systems that are oppressive to immigrants.

Relative to this argument, diaspora theology of struggle for equality sees oppressive systems in current immigrant and international policies as opposed to God’s agenda of justice and fairness for all—regardless of nationality, political position and immigrant status. It celebrates a God of equal dealing with the whole human community, manifesting his good and all pervasive purpose for all. It views a God who advocates on behalf of the outsiders and protects their right to live in equal opportunity with the residents of the land.

Furthermore, this theology seeks for possible avenues that ushers the transformation of policies as well as the people’s mindset in order to improve the treatment of immigrants. The Scripture is a transformative tool from which policy makers can find inspiration and guiding principles in amending immigration laws. The church, as God’s mission agent is also called to be a participant in God’s agenda of redeeming the cause of the immigrants; thus, this theology also upholds that the strategic and non-violent struggle of immigrants to convey their grievances to proper authorities is an important exercise of justice and equality. This theology does not sow hatred against the oppressor but it hopes for the oppressor’s own deliverance from a cruel system that has blinded them. Arguing along this line, Leela Gandhi quotes Mahatma Gandhi saying,

“The oppressors had to be liberated from their worst selves” (1998:137). Using Fernandez’s metaphor, it can be inferred that the resistance and political exorcism will help the oppressors to come to an attitude of retreat, realization, and eventually transformation.

### A Filipino Diaspora Theology of Connectionalism

As explained before, connectionalism in the UMC is sometimes seen by critics as a negative effect of globalized thinking. For example some have charged that the UMC’s connectional structure discourages Methodist bodies outside the United States from being autonomous. In the Philippines, “globalization versus autonomy” is still an ongoing battle. Having postcolonialism as one of the theoretical tools in this study, this theology views parts of the structure of UMC’s connectionalism as detrimental to local Methodist body’s readiness for independence, contextualization and indigenous ways of spirituality. The structures of connectionalism are related to the same structure that forces millions to migrate—globalization.

Although this study recognizes the negative sides of connectionalism, the data from the research also shows the positive side of the UMC’s connectional organization. Firstly, the participants basically pointed out how connectionalism created within local churches a sense of hospitality to Filipino immigrants who are received as fellow Methodists. Secondly, a connectional church like the UMC can provide an atmosphere of familiarity (in the midst of all the unfamiliarity in diaspora life) for Filipino Methodist immigrants in the American Methodist system because of the similarity of the basic elements of church life and organization. Examples are worship liturgy and leadership structure. Thus, in spite of some drawbacks of a globalized system, the participants

plainly identified how in simple ways, this same structure is profitable for immigrants like them.

Filipino diaspora theology of connectionalism, although critical of some aspects of globalized-connectional structure, nonetheless upholds that Christian unity and hospitality transcends ethnic differences and geographical distance. It also points to God and the love and faith of all believers as the connecting links between churches that are separated by national boundaries. Consequently, in order for the American church to be missional, it should cultivate the practice and theology of hospitality to fellow believers who migrate from other countries. This theology also reflects the empowerment of Filipino immigrants through the web of accommodation and familiarity provided by a common theology and connectional mandate.

All the 14 themes articulated should not be viewed separately but should be studied as a whole and connected to each other forming one contextual theology—Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology. Moreover, the themes do not reflect cultural elements that are separated from each other but are overarched by one theme—the cultural identity of Filipino diasporic people.

### The Impact of Scriptures to Contextual Theology

This section of the data analysis discusses the impact of scriptural principles on the method of contextualization. This analysis does not focus on the impact of Scriptures to the final product of contextual theology but on the impact of Scriptures to the method of contextualization.

### Scripture-Inspired Contextual Theology

The Scriptures itself is a treasury of contextual theology material. Apparently, many biblical writers have contextualized the messages of God in accordance with the occasion, the writer's intention, and the recipient's cultural background and needs. Contextual theology has been demonstrated by many biblical writings and characters both in the Old and New Testaments. "The different books in the Bible can be seen as testimonies of local theologies" (Sedmak 2002:57).

Relating contextual practice to the diaspora theme, some Old Testament scholars even argue that most of the books in the Hebrew Scriptures were formed in context of the Israelite's postexilic life. This notion implies that the biblical exile story is fundamental in the formation of theology of the Old Testament. This also suggests how important it is to read the Old Testament with diaspora as an overarching theme in mind. Lastly, the importance of context in shaping biblical writings is a clear motivation for engaging in contextual theologizing.

Contextualization on many occasions is also exhibited in the New Testament. The gospel writers depict Jesus as a great contextualizer. Sedmak asserts, "Jesus did situational theology. He had an eye for detail, the small things and the little people. Jesus used occasions to do theology, and he respected the dynamics of particular situations" (2002:29). Through his contextualized messages, he demonstrated how essential contextualization is in making mission relevant and meaningful to recipients. In another section, Sedmak added, "Jesus invites us to wake up—to see the small things and to discover the dynamics and proper weight of situations. Theology becomes an art, the art of looking at details, the art of responding to the 'little ones'" (2002:31).

The same contextual approach can be seen in Paul's life and ministry. In fact, before starting the Second Level session of the focus groups, I encouraged the participants to reflect on the words of Paul to the Corinthians:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor. 9:19-23, NIV)

The participants were very familiar with the passage, but they were not able to see it before as both an encouragement and a guideline for contextualization. Through this passage I also explained to them the importance of a hermeneutical community such as them, when engaging in contextualization, be conscious that their ultimate purpose is missional. As expounded by Paul, mission should always be the crucial consequence of a contextualized message.

### Scripture-Guided Hermeneutics of Contextualization

One of the main principles observed in this research study is scriptural accountability. Dyrness stresses that "only Scriptures, not some particular interpretive schema is transcultural. For the authority of the Scripture reflect God's own transcendent authority over all cultures" (1990:31). As a model contextualizer, Jesus made his message relevant to the listeners without contradicting any principles in the Mosaic Law. Inserted within the collection of Jesus' sayings in Matthew chapter 5, are his words, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but

to fulfill them” (5:17, NIV). Thus, in all parts of the contextualization process in this study, accountability to scriptural standards was carefully observed.

Another contextualization principle found in many passages in the Scriptures is the usage of familiar symbols, images, literatures, and stories that help recipients convey a message. Paul, for example, when preaching to Greek thinkers, debated on the existence and nature of the divine in a presentation that they can relate to. A line in his Areopagus sermon notes, “For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring’” (Acts 17:28, NIV). Here, Paul used Greek poetry to contextualize the gospel message in an argument that the listeners could understand. As a result, a number of people believed (17:34).

In this study, various terminologies, ideologies, practices and worldviews—from the participants’ homeland and as by-products of their migration experiences—were used in conceptualizing a diaspora theology. These issues are identified in this study as cultural themes. These themes serve as links between the diaspora biblical passages and the participants’ diaspora life. Sedmak describes the other benefits of this approach saying,

Little theologies can be developed around images rooted in the local culture. Such images reveal a way to capture the key points of little theologies. They help make little theologies concrete and colorful, and they can be a source of inspiration to think theologically. The use of images as a theological tool is an invitation to be creative. (2002:147)

Thus, in this study, the Bible was used hermeneutically both as a measuring rod and a pattern for contextualization. Among others hermeneutical principles, these two played the key role in this study.

### Scriptures Connected with Readers' Experience

One of the definitive goals of this study is to create avenues in which the participants (as readers) will have a meaningful encounter with the diaspora texts in the Bible. In every session we spent studying the Bible together, the participants built a spiritual connection with the diaspora characters in the Scriptures. Even though they already know these biblical characters prior this study, they were not able to hear their “diaspora voices” before. Thus, the text was made alive as it became relevant to their diaspora context. In her article, “By the Rivers of Babylon: Exile as a Way of Life,” Cuban theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz stresses, “The meaning of every text is found in the relationship that is created between the reader, the writer, and the text” (1995:151).

Creating a connection with the text as diaspora people are very uncommon to typical Bible study groups like them. Like many other Christian groups, they were used to always spiritualizing every biblical story without reading the specific socio-cultural parallels between them and the Bible characters—which in this case is diaspora life. Furthermore, Western authors who write without any diaspora consciousness because they never experienced any form of migration made most of the study materials they used. This study is a clear demonstration of how contextual theology can usher a community to discover the intended capability of the Scriptures to speak to the specific context of the reader. Furthermore, contextual theology can usher a group of ordinary readers to discover their ability to be a hermeneutical community that can create a theology relevant and meaningful to them.

In this study, the participants were happily surprised in discovering the possibility of reading the Bible contextually. Most of them have verbally expressed their

appreciation for having (re)discovered the diaspora stories in the Bible. This discovery, as explained in other sections, has encouraged many of them to read the Bible contextually. Furthermore, it has inspired some of them to share this discovery with other Filipino immigrants who have not yet read the Bible this way.

### The Impact of Contextual Theology on Reading the Scriptures

This part of the analysis deals with the effect of the contextualization process on the participants' way of reading the Scriptures rather than the effect of the end product of contextualization. The reason is because the coverage of my observation research is limited only within the actual theologizing process and does not include any period after the formation of the contextual theology. In other words, I have not done any focus group sessions that were intended to observe the effect of the contextual theology after its formation and application to the life of the participants.

### A Catalyst of Awareness

One of the most immediate effects I observed while we were in the focus group sessions is the stirring up of awareness among participants with regards to the overarching theme of diaspora in the Scriptures. As explained earlier, the participants expressed amazement at the fact that the biblical stories they long knew, carry significant diaspora theme that specifically connect to their current diaspora experiences.

To discover that the participants have not yet experienced reading the Scriptures in light of their diaspora life is somewhat surprising. Originally, I was hoping I could discover some pieces of undeveloped local theologies that they had already formed from their years of studying together. This lack is one of the reasons why I changed some of my intended approach, so that I could accommodate to their need of hearing diaspora



voices in the Scriptures for the first time. This surprise confirms the significance of this study and the need for the research participants to develop awareness for reading the Scriptures as immigrants. The awareness they developed during study gave them inspiration and encouragement.

Aside from inspiration, this awareness also *created a sense of empowerment*.

Diaspora life, in many ways has taken away a lot from them including a sense of power that they once had in their homeland. This power refers to a position of stability, security and rights. In diaspora life, these are taken away from them, leaving them as victims, inferior, and excluded. In addition, most of the Christian literatures they used are void of any theme on diaspora. Prior to this study, they did not see biblical stories as specific resource of instruction addressing their diaspora life. Thus, the study became an eye-opener for the participants. In essence, this awareness has reempowered them, affirming their identity and significance as a diaspora community. Furthermore, the participants, being church people, regard the Scriptures as the highest authority—an authority above the ideologies that are suppressing their conditions as immigrants. In their study, the Scriptures emphasize God’s compassion and favor for the immigrants. Thus for them, their designation in the world community as immigrants has been affirmed as valuable.

### A Way of Instruction

The whole research process has taught the participants to do contextual diaspora reading all by themselves. The study sessions demonstrated to them how to be conscious of diaspora themes in the Scriptures. Aside from the few passages that we used, there are still numerous diaspora stories in the Bible that they can study—either individually or corporately.

## The Impact of Diasporic Identity Theology on Culture

This research upholds that the *Scriptures affirm the value of culture*. On the other hand, the Scriptures also confront culture and serve as a guide for its transformation. This part of the analysis deals with points where the diaspora contextualized theology addresses the negative elements of cultural traits and perspectives embedded in Filipino migration. This section functions in a countercultural mode. It proposes the application of the insights gathered here to promote social transformation.

### Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology Addresses the Attitude of Isolation

In many cases seclusion is a response of immigrant churches to the unfamiliarity around them in an effort to build among themselves a sense of security, belongingness, identity and familiarity, unthreatened by the reality of the outside world where the more dominant culture groups always reign. This response is legitimate and understandable. However, seclusion is contrary to the church's calling of being an inclusive mission agent. This attitude limits a spiritual community's potential of expanding its ministry to people of other racial backgrounds. Nevertheless, this premise does not necessarily imply that monocultural churches are not missiologically inclusive. On the contrary, inclusiveness is not only reflected in the diversity of membership composition; rather, seclusion is overcome when monocultural immigrant churches starts to fellowship with churches of a different ethnicity. Secondly, inclusivism in mission is also reflected in efforts to reach out to the poor of the community, regardless of color or ethnic background.

The participants, whether they are from the multiethnic church or from the Filipino church, have pointed to Filipinos' distinctive ability in assimilating to a

multicultural environment. Religious groups are not an exception. Participants explained that their own respective churches are responsive to the plurality of cultures in their area. The participants from the multicultural church stated that the main reason they joined a multiracial church is because of its diversity. For them cultural differences are not hurdles since they claim that they can easily assimilate to diverse environments. The participants from the Filipino church expressed their inclusivity as well by joining district-wide events that celebrate diversity. This study will address other immigrant churches that isolate themselves from other cultural groups and have narrowed their relationship to people of their own race. Many Filipino religious communities are effective models in promoting inclusivism in mission and ecumenical relations.

#### Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology Addresses the Neglect of Filipinoness

Because of Filipinos' unique ability to adapt, some went to the opposite extreme side of the equilibrium, which is total assimilation. This action entails abandoning their Filipino identity. Another reason for this excessive assimilation is the pressure that society applies to immigrant communities—that if they do not learn to alter and adapt, they will always experience exclusion and foreignness. This study also represents a dynamic which is currently occurring in many Filipino immigrant households—the preservation of the Filipino identity by first generation immigrant parents and the Americanization of their American-born children.

This study addresses these issues and recommends that Filipino churches develop cooperative efforts to help new immigrants to adapt without discarding their unique Filipino traits. Furthermore, Filipino churches should promote awareness that American-born Filipino children need to learn about their native roots. In fact, this study has

reminded the participants themselves, to be accountable in imparting their unique Filipino-ness to their children that were born in the United States.

### Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology Addresses Disunity among Filipino Immigrants

In many instances during the session, the participants mentioned that there are still divisions among many Filipino communities. The factors vary and were discussed extensively in previous chapters. The participants themselves have experienced the impact of divisions in some of the Filipino groups they belonged, including their churches. They testified how factors, like regionalism, that leads to divisions can be overcome in church settings through the faith that keeps them together. In other Filipino groups that are non-religious, Filipinos can draw wisdom and inspiration from positive Filipinos relational traits such as *bayanihan* and *damayan*. *Damayan* can overlook the fact that one came from another region or from the lowest economic rank and accepts the Filipino immigrant as a beloved *kababayan*. This study has drawn insights from diaspora biblical stories which depict unity among exiled people as a response to difficulties in migration life. In the same way, the participants were reminded that one the most effective responses to the difficulties in diaspora life is to strengthen their *damayan* spirit.

### Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology Addresses Policies That Disregard the Concerns of Filipino Immigrants

In some sections of this study, the issue of discrimination was tackled. It was expressed how evident preferential treatment is given to other groups of immigrants over groups that are stereotypically perceived as inferior. This designation is frequently attached to the economic condition of the immigrant's homeland. This study discussed that in spite of the fact that Filipino immigrants are the largest Asian group in the United

States, Filipinos have a weak sociopolitical voice. Because of this weakness, some sectors of society tend to de-prioritized them and other more dominant groups tend to belittle them. This study addresses this disparity and advocates transformation in the way the host country treats Filipinos. This study also promotes that equal opportunities and access be given to immigrants with regards to job opportunities and social service. Ethnic background should never be a factor in approving or disapproving someone for a job position.

### Filipino American Diasporic Identity Theology Addresses the American Church

In spite of the vast possibilities at hand in doing mission among the immigrants, many American congregations still play a minor role. In areas where the emerging immigrant church of the second group is located, two churches have recently closed down because they were not able to adapt to the growing multiculturalism in their community. The participants of this church have witnessed how ten years ago, during their brink of closure, they have learned to change and adapt to this social change and eventually have become a multiethnic congregation. To prevent ineffectivity, American churches that are located in immigrant-populated areas should learn to embrace change early and start to engage in mission to people in their neighborhoods who are of different racial background. Before them is an opportunity to engage in cross-cultural mission without crossing the seas.

American churches could also learn insightful lessons from immigrant churches which will help them reignite dynamism and enthusiasm in their church life. In an interview I conducted with one of the Anglo members of the church in this study, we discussed how he witnessed the dramatic change of racial composition in their church

membership. In one of the questions, I asked what he thought is the hardest obstacle why some American churches are not willing to embrace multiethnicity in membership. He explained:

It is basically because of the old timers. It is really hard for them to change. They are so used of being a traditional congregation. Something different to them is scary. But there was nothing to be scared about. Because people of other culture—they have many things that they know that can be of great value to us. That is what happened to our church. We started to be open for change. (Interview with Doug, September 2, 2006)

Because of the openness of Anglo members of this church to other views and practices, the immigrant members of the congregation are able to hold leadership positions and, as a result, influence their mission, worship, and spiritual growth in ways that carries dynamism and diversity.

In the district where the two churches in this study are located, Filipinos lean more toward joining an American church or a multicultural church rather than other Asian immigrant groups. Some of the multicultural churches in this district that have I seen have Filipinos in their membership but they do not have other Asian immigrant groups. In most cases, the other groups build monocultural churches rather than join multiethnic churches. Filipinos' willingness to join multiethnic organizations seemingly is based on their ability to assimilate with other cultural groups faster than other immigrant groups. This ability indicates potential possibilities of how American churches and Filipino churchgoers can find avenues of working together and mutually learning from each other.

American churches, as host churches, could and should also reach out in hospitality to immigrant churches. Hospitality to strangers is a fundamental theme in the Scriptures. In Christine Pohl's words, "The biblical focus on responsibility to resident

aliens suggests that a concern for the physical, social and spiritual well-being of migrants and refugees should not be peripheral to Christian life, mission and witness; instead it should be central” (Pohl 2003:9). This biblical principle can be achieved if the American church as the host church will overcome feelings of superiority and indifference over churches that are of different cultural groups. Further emphasizing the missiological value of this biblical principle, she adds:

The expansion of the early church depended on the hospitality and believers who are willing to make a place in their homes for strangers. Early Christian households made room for traveling teachers and persecuted Christians, as well as shared meal and congregational worship (2003:8).

In the preceding chapters, I described the theoretical framework of the study, the methodology used in approaching the problem, the data collected, the analysis of the data, the findings, and the extent to which I have attained my goal. In the Conclusion, I gave a summary of the theological themes developed in the process of the study and the hermeneutical tools I used in the contextualization process. Finally, I explained the rich missiological implication that this study offers.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this research project, I studied the missional potential and the problematic issues that accompany Filipino migration. Specifically, I focused on the problem of identity crisis that Filipinos experience in diaspora life. I set as my goal the construction of a Filipino American diaspora theology that reflects the cultural identity of Filipino immigrants who reside in the United States. The main research methodology used was participant observation, focus groups, and interviews that were integrated with historical and theological investigation as well as the application of a contextual procedure adapted from Robert Schreiter and William Dyrness. I also applied the principle of using a hermeneutical community as a main catalyst of producing the contextual theology. Thus, in this study, the research participants also functioned as a community of interpreters who observed and interpreted the information with me.

In reporting, I have divided the conclusion into four sections. The first section is an analysis of how this research answered the problem and subproblem mentioned in Chapter 1. The second section is a compilation of theories and methods from the hermeneutical tools I used in the research. The third is a summary of the fourteen theological themes that were articulated and developed in this study. The last section contains recommendations, further information, and insights that relate directly to missiology concerns.

### How the Problem and Subproblems Were Answered

The problem of this study is the identity crisis Filipinos experience in diaspora life. The main goal of this research is to construct a Filipino American diasporic identity theology. Chapter 4 showed how the goal was met through the fourteen theological



themes articulated. These themes are spirituality, two homes, adaptability, *damayan* (sharing), connection to homeland, courage, cultural preservation, morality, respect for the elderly, close familial ties, God's providence, cultural expression in worship, struggle for equality, and connectionalism. These themes reflect Filipino immigrants' cultural identity and experiences. Through the contextualization procedure conducted, these themes were theologized and articulated into a contextual theology that responds to Filipinos' diasporic identity crisis.

The following are the subproblems of this study and how they were answered.

1. What are the key elements in Filipinos' diaspora experience and culture that are essential in developing a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology?

The two main elements I found that are fundamental in the formation of the contextualized Filipino diaspora theology are cultural traits and perspectives. As explained on page 57, traits refer to the observable or physical aspects of culture such as practices, customs, and rituals. Perspectives refer to the cognitive aspects such as ideas, belief systems, and morality. These two elements served as windows for me to be able to identify the crucial data that I later articulated as theological themes.

Another key component in Filipinos' diaspora life is their colonial and postcolonial experience. In some sections of this research, I emphasized the fact that Filipino immigrants' history of suffering from colonizers have contributed significantly to their current cultural identity. Postcolonial study has helped me see the valuable information embedded in their past and current struggle as a subjugated and dispersed nation.

Another important aspect in the formation of Filipinos' diaspora identity is their economic life. For example, it is mentioned in the early section that the economic system

in their homeland fails to provide equal opportunity and just wages for most people, pressuring many to migrate (see p. 10). Furthermore, it was also accentuated how some international policies oppress developing countries such as the Philippines into further poverty. With their mark as a third world immigrant, they received inferior treatment in a first world land. This economic struggle both in their homeland and in their new home is an important aspect of their diaspora identity.

## 2. How is Filipino immigrants' cultural identity different from the homeland Filipinos'?

In some of the sections, the cultural traits and perspectives that Filipinos have brought from their homeland were modified in some manner so that they can also adapt to their new environment. For example, Filipino immigrants' spirituality is different from their homeland spirituality because Filipinos have also acclimatized to the religious worldview of their host (see pp. 182-186). Secondly, Filipinos' cultural identity has evolved into something different from their homeland's as a response to the challenges they faced in diaspora life—challenges that they do not encounter in their homeland. Filipino immigrants' cultural identity demonstrates a bicultural pose—a blend of their old home and new home (see pp. 186-189).

## 3. How will the diaspora biblical stories shed insights into the formation of a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology?

During the course of the study, the participants became aware of the fact that the Scriptures are a big compilation of various diaspora narratives. The Scriptures have an overarching theme and timeline of diaspora episodes and stories. The participants were able to see the Scriptures as a mirror that reflects their own experiences and cultural

identity (see pp. 153-172). With this awareness, the participants were also able to experience a sense of empowerment (see p. 221).

4. What are the missiological implications of a contextualized Filipino diaspora theology to the Filipino church in diaspora, the Filipinos in diaspora, in general, and the larger mission terrain the church is presently facing?

To the Filipino church in diaspora, this study will help local churches engage in mission among Filipino immigrants. The findings in this study will serve as foundational principles in making Bible study materials and gospel-presentation materials. To the Filipinos in general, if the findings of this study will be used as a gospel presentation, Filipino immigrants will be led to the Scriptures as a source of instruction in facing the challenges of diaspora life. Furthermore, this diasporic identity theology can point the unchurched Filipinos to the church as the faith community that reflects the compassion of God for the immigrants. This study also poses challenges to American churches that are located in immigrant-populated places, to engage in mission to people in their neighborhood (see pp. 225-227). To the global church in general, this study is a small contribution to the global mission concern for immigrant communities such as the Filipinos.

### Hermeneutical Principles

Various hermeneutical principles were formed and used during the contextualization process. Some of these were adaptations from contextualization models done by other scholars while others were formed prior to and during the contextualization process itself. The realization of the goal of this research to develop a contextual theology of Filipino American diasporic identity affirms their validity and effectiveness. In the

discussion, there are specific instances also where some of the intended hermeneutical formats were not applied due to unavoidable factors.

### The Hermeneutical Community

Unlike other hermeneutical approaches, where the academic theologian single-handedly dominates the interpretation process, the contextualization model employed values the community within its social contexts as main participants and contributors to the creation of a contextual theology. The result of this study affirms the effectiveness of the community as the observers and interpreters of the theologizing process. This effectiveness is evident by the community's firsthand understanding and experience of the social, political, and cultural context of the topic—diaspora identity. Second, the principle of hermeneutical community affirms the value of communal effort in creating their theology where the process is not manipulated by the subjectivism of a single interpreter.

However, due to the participants' time schedules and lack of availability, I was not able to hold any group sessions with the hermeneutical community during Level 3 of the contextualization process. To some extent, this lack has affected the research project's design of conducting a thoroughly communal interactive process. As compensation, I asked the participants for their input through a written follow-up questionnaire. (See Appendix I). Twenty questionnaires were distributed but only fourteen were returned. (See Appendix J). Even though there were no actual focus group sessions done, I was able to get some of the data needed in Level 3 from these responses.

Furthermore, because the second group was of multiethnic composition, some of the input gathered came from non-Filipinos. They not only evident how their sentiments

and experiences are similar with the Filipino participants, they also demonstrated how important their contributions are in observing the Filipino participants in the context of a multiracial community. In many aspects, Filipinos in this church relate more closely to their fellow immigrants than to church members who are Americans.

### Context-Driven Interpretation

Unlike other hermeneutics, where the interpreter is attached to the objectivity of the process, contextualization recognizes the inevitability of the context influencing the process and result of interpretation. In spite of denial, other hermeneutics and theologies also exhibit elements of contextual reasoning. These theologies, however, deny the influence of the reader and the context to the process and result of interpretation. Earlier western theology, for example, claimed universal truth in spite of the fact that some of its formation is based on western modernity principles and in the process discredited other forms of hermeneutical approach outside of its academic framework.

Contextualization as used in this study does not try to escape from this fact; rather, it points out the benefit of using the context to bring out the relevance of scriptural truths to the “flesh and blood reader.” To be context driven is to read the Bible with the purpose of seeking principles and stories that directly apply to the reader’s cultural background, social condition or personal need. This study benefits from contextualization as its hermeneutical model and expresses the relevance of the formulated contextual theology to both the hermeneutical community and to the main readers—the Filipino diaspora communities—reflecting its effectiveness.

### Scriptural Accountability

One of the basic hermeneutical principles in this study is the interpreters' accountability to scriptural authority and guidelines. Even if the context is a strong factor in the research procedure it does not abandon the necessity of being accountable to the Scriptures. Because of this accountability, the study focused on the goal of creating a theology that reflects the relevance of the Scriptures to the readers' contexts without falling to a context centeredness that cheapens scriptural truths by making them as a "religious wrapping" to validate one's claim. In short, a balance between the context and the essentials of scriptural parameters was well observed.

### Flexibility

As reflected in the adapted model, one of the most effective features of the research procedure used is its design for adaptability. As examples, in spite of the linear process followed, I still could adjust the research format when the answer expected in Level 3 was already clarified in Level 1, or if after Level 3, there is a need to go back to Level 2 and repeat some of the interactions. Apparently, the methodology was flexible enough to occasionally adjust to the needs, availability of the participants, and accessibility of the data needed—factors that only became apparent during the actual research.

Adjustments were made at times because some of the intended formats were cancelled. For example, when it was not possible anymore to conduct a focus group session for Level 3, I resorted to using a questionnaire. (See Appendix I, A Follow-Up Questionnaire: Developing a Diaspora Contextual Theology for Filipino Immigrants). Although some of the needed data were reduced in quantity, I did obtain some of the

basic information I needed from the 14 participants willing to complete the questionnaire.  
(See Appendix J, Summary of the Participants Answer to the Follow-Up Questionnaire)

The First Summary: From Homelessness to Two Homes

Figure 5 is a summary that reflects the three main sections of this study: *The Problem*, *The Study*, and *The Recommendation*. Some elements in this chart are taken from previous charts and are developed here to fit the overall theme of two homes.

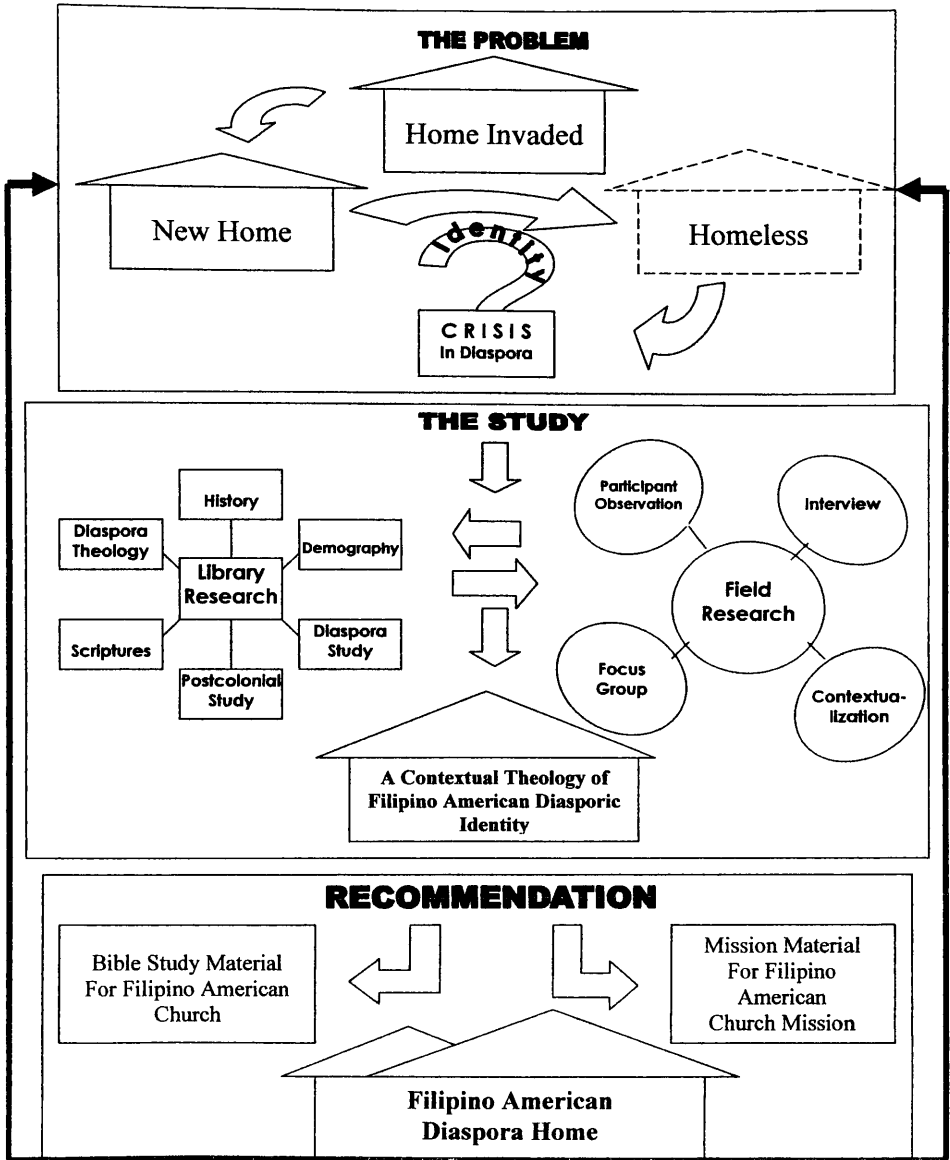


Figure 5: From homelessness to two homes.



*The Problem* section is the part where the research problem is illustrated. This section is a development of the chart, *The Problem* in Figure 1 where the background of the problem is first introduced. I have now changed the titles of all the icons in the figure into topics that all point to the main theme *home*. I also changed the icons into a house-like figure. As explained earlier, the theme *home* is developed in this study as a metaphor that refers to either to the participants' homeland or the participants' unique cultural traits and perspectives that they have brought from their homeland (see pp. 118, 132-134, 186-189). The *home invaded* icon represents the root cause of Filipinos' identity crisis which is the many years of colonization they experienced from various empires (see pp. 64-71). The years of colonization resulted in the invasion of the Filipinos' psyche ushering in an experience of sociocultural and personal identity crisis. The *new home* icon represents the migration of Filipinos to the United States—leaving their previous home and entering their new home. The icon *homeless* points to the crisis experienced by many Filipinos when they feel incapable of assimilating to the society and cultural ways of their new home while at the same time letting go of their hold of the memories and ways of their homeland. The physical distance that separates them from their loved ones and everything culturally familiar intensifies their homesickness and they eventually feel “homeless.” This homesickness is the start of identity crisis in diaspora life. The *question mark* represents the condition of identity crisis. The struggle between the need to assimilate and the longing to preserve their old ways forms a lot of critical questions.

The second part of this framework is called *The Study*. This section is part of the first portrayal of the theoretical framework and is explained more explicitly in that section. The chart reflects the two main sections of the research: *library research* and

*field research*. Library research covers the goal of acquiring the needed data from demography, history, diaspora study, postcolonial study and Scriptures (see p. 47). Field research covers the purpose of obtaining the needed data through participant observation, focus group, interview, and the 3-level contextualization model adapted from Schreiter and Dyrness (see p. 49). The overarching research mechanics used is participant observation, focus group, and interview. The icon, *Contextual Theology of Filipino American Diasporic Identity* reflects the 14 contextual theology points created by this study: spirituality, two homes, adaptability, *damayan*, connection to homeland, courage, cultural preservation, morality, respect for the elderly, close familial ties, God's providence, cultural expression in worship, struggle for equality; and connectionalism (see pp. 153-172).

The third section of this framework is *The Recommendation*. As explained before, I did not gather any actual research on the items mentioned in this section. The information here reflects the anticipated outcome of this research if the research participants will implement my two main recommendations. They are to develop Bible study materials to be used by members of their churches and to develop a missional tool for their churches to be used in reaching out to their *kababayan*. The icon *Bible study materials* points to possible resources that Filipino American churches can create reflecting the findings and insights of my research. The icon *missional tools* points to possible mission materials and activities that Filipino American churches can create in reaching to their fellow Filipinos equipped with insights that this study has provided (see p. 249). The icon *Filipino American Diaspora Home* reflects the anticipated condition of illumination and healing from identity crisis that Filipino Americans will experience

when the principles articulated in this research are studied and applied. Unlike the icons in *The Problem* section where the houses have only one roof, the house illustrated here has two roofs. This reflects a condition when a Filipino immigrant has finally accepted the inevitability of adopting a bicultural pose. The two-roof house reflects one identity yet two components—Filipinoness and Americanness. The dissimilarity of the roofs' size reflects the research participants prioritizing of their Filipino ways over their adapted American ways.

Finally, the long arrow that goes back to *The Problem* section illustrates how churches that apply the findings and recommendations of this study will be directed to go out missionally to share their enlightening experience with others who are still “homeless,” and they will welcome into their congregations those needing a second home.

### The Second Summary: The Theology of Home

This section summarizes the 14 main theological themes discovered in this study into three central themes. These theological themes all play out under the metaphorical notion of *home*. Home is developed in this study, first as a term that refers to the country of residence of immigrants, whether the current residence or the homeland where the immigrant was born. Second, it is used metaphorically referring to the cultural identity of the immigrants that they have brought from their homeland.

#### Turtle-Home Theology

The term “turtle” is used here as a metaphor that refers to immigrants who, like turtles, are able to carry their “home” wherever they go. “Home” here refers to the immigrants' cultural identity: practices, worldviews, behavior, values, ideologies, and

beliefs. “Turtle home,” therefore, refers to factors that describe the immigrants’ resolve to preserve their home culture in their diaspora experience. Home for them is not fixed in a particular place but movable to other locations where all of the features of their barrio are carried over and relived in diaspora life. Turtle-home theology is also a reflection of the immigrants’ slow process of assimilation. Just as the turtle’s movement is known for its slowness, turtle-home reflects a slow phase of the immigrants’ adaptation to their new location.

The theology of turtle-home reflects a God who values the preservation of one’s cultural identity. The uniqueness of each society reflects God’s distinctive dealings with each individual and with each cultural group. To be a turtle is to recognize God’s equal relations with each society and the foundational principles of morality and values that are embedded in each culture. Furthermore, to be a turtle is to be aware of each society’s God given responsibility to pass on their unique “home heritage” to their diaspora-born children.

This uniqueness also speaks of their communal strength as a people to carry and rebuild “home” outside their national borders. Because this uniqueness defines who they are, they continue to thrive as a community with a unique characteristic that they can share with others in the diaspora terrain. In other words, a “non-turtle” will not be able to contribute anything to the multiethnic table.

In relation to this argument, another theological implication of turtle-home is the creation of multiracial societies. If immigrants will not carry their home with them, they will be swallowed up by the dominant cultural framework of their host’s home. In essence, if they will not define who they are, others will do it for them—them meaning,

the host who is inclined to colonize the mind of the foreigners who do not give a clear definition of themselves. Thus, these immigrants will not be able to contribute anything towards the building of a diverse community. In that case, diversity would not be possible, but if immigrants will learn to carry their homes, they can be participants in the building of a multicultural home.

The creation of multicultural societies also developed positive social values such as respect, equality, and justice. Even though members of such societies are sometimes unaware of it, they are cultivating moral principles that are similar to scriptural principles, which, in turn, can be an important links for people of that society to accept the message of the gospel. Nonetheless, all these good things will be impossible if immigrants will not learn to carry their home in diaspora life.

Moreover, carrying one's home is a postcolonial pose because it resists the dominant culture in the empire where immigrants tend to be altered into the identity of the hosts. To be a turtle is to redeem the once suppressed cultural identity of immigrants. Ironically, redemption occurs in the home of their previous colonizers. Lastly, to recognize one's "turtleness" is to be freed from pressure of instantaneous assimilation. This pressure contributes hugely to someone's identity crisis. A theology of turtle-home carries a message of healing to a diaspora people stricken by the guilt of failing to assimilate. This theology also carries a message of freedom to those who are marginalized and made outcasts by some residents' ideology that immigrants should be like them in order to become acceptable.

### Bird-Home Theology

As explained in the earlier section of this research, the term “bird” is used here as a metaphor referring to immigrants who, like immigrant birds, are more decisive in leaving their home and who build a new home with less difficulty. “Bird-home” is a metaphor that refers to the condition that describes an immigrant’s evolving cultural identity as a result of effective assimilation.

Bird-home is contrary to turtle-home when immigrants, like turtles, carry their home—practices, ideologies, worldviews, and morality—wherever they go. Bird-home behavior represents various findings in this study that fall under the theme of assimilation (as opposed to preservation): adaptability to a multiracial environment, struggle for equality, and connectionalism.

The theology of bird-home reflects the God-given ability of individuals to adapt themselves easily to a different physical and cultural environment in order to survive the process of migration. This theology upholds that one’s cultural identity is not bounded by one’s citizenship. Obviously, migration proves that cultural identity does transcend national identity. Even though individuals as members of a particular cultural group are designed to own the cultural makeup of their own group, they can also become accustomed to another culture and thus include additional cultural components to what they already have. Though this theology upholds that a transformation of the immigrant’s identity should occur in the process of assimilation, this change does not espouse the negation of one’s original cultural identity.

Bird-home theology also reflects the struggles of the diaspora people as they encounter persecution, racism, deconstruction, and identity crisis. Through these

adversities, they experienced a renewed longing for spiritual answers and for a spiritual community. This study affirms how spiritual practices and beliefs strengthen their faith and unify them into a *damayan*-community. This community strengthens and guides them to undergo the difficult process of assimilation.

Bird-home theology also reflects biblical narratives where God is described as the one who leads His people to become wanderers and strangers of another land. Through this diaspora experience, God shapes their character into being a people of stronger religious identity, while at the same time a people of insight and wisdom, that they are enabled to integrate effectively as wanderers into an unfamiliar land. Furthermore, through this same journey, God has revealed himself to them as a God who favors the landless, the foreigners, and the refugees.

In most cases, the “bird-home” for Filipino immigrants is not yet entirely constructed. The different aspects of assimilation, reconstruction, and amalgamation are still in progress. Unlike the stability of cultural construction in their homeland, Filipino diaspora culture continuously evolves. This progression is mainly due to the constant interaction of Filipino diaspora community with the host community and with other immigrant groups. Second, as first generation Filipinos continue to arrive, the second generation of Filipino immigrants—those who are born and raised in the U.S—continue to thrive, creating another cultural framework that is different from their parents. Thus, bird-home theology reflects a cultural identity that is still constantly evolving into that which is not yet. The contextual theology presented here is a theological reflection of the current reality of the studied topic. Thus, future study done in the same subject and goal may result in conclusions that are updated of the findings presented here.

Bird-home theology can be a source of inspiration for those who are experiencing a cultural transformation in diaspora life. Just as “turtleness” can cause identity crisis, “birdness” can also cause inner and communal difficulties related to identity. Immigrants for example who needed to be more bird than turtle at a particular point in life can be accused by their diaspora community of betraying one’s original cultural and national identity. Bird-home theology can enlighten a community to understand the inevitability of assimilation in diaspora life and guide them through different aspects of transition with scriptural stories and principles.

### Two-Home Theology

As clarified earlier, Filipino immigrants are able to be a turtle at one time and be a bird on another. Some Filipino immigrants have learned to balance these two characteristics and become a bird and a turtle at the same time. This position is the balance of assimilation and preservation. To be a bird-turtle is what Segovia explains as having the ability to have two homes: carrying their home culture while at the same time assimilating to the culture of their host.

Two-home theology reflects the attitude of those who made peace with their diaspora condition and have ceased from feeling homeless and have started to realize the gift of having two-homes: the original home they are carrying on their back (turtle-home); and the home they are newly constructing (bird-home). This theology does not entail a compulsory condition where an immigrant is forced to accept a new reality. This theology reflects a state of illumination that immigrants experienced after recognizing that their identity is not limited by the cultural border defined by birth nor by the current reality found in diaspora life. Rather, it is seeing a God who allows a diaspora people to



have two residences. This theology speaks of a God who journeys with the diaspora people and guides them to discover themselves and the harmony between assimilation and preservation. This theology reflects the inevitability of hybridity in the lives of a diaspora people. Thus, this theology advocates that immigrants should not be found in the middle of the border where one feels cruelly pulled by the forces of assimilation and preservation. Rather, they must learn to exist serenely on both sides of the border, having two homes. Assimilation in this theology is not synonymous with deletion. Rather, successful assimilation is adding up another characteristic to what already exists and does not in any way demand erasure of the current or the past. Two-home theology provides healing from the pain of identity crisis.

As mentioned earlier, to have two homes can also be considered a postcolonial pose. The creation of a twofold home is the creation of a new identity—something similar to their hosts' but not exactly like them because the original native identity is not entirely deleted. Acquiring the components needed from the hosts' culture is not an easy piece to obtain because it requires a lot of imitation. Postcolonial study recognizes this diaspora behavior and calls it mimicry. The two-home theology is important for postcolonial people like the Filipino diaspora communities. A hybrid diaspora identity reflects God's unimpeded work of creating a new identity for and through an underprivileged and displaced people. This theology opposes the conjecture that innovations are only started in the powerful center. This theology also recognizes how an intended tool for domination can be turned around to become a tool in the formation of a new, genuine, and valuable cultural identity.

Finally, two-home from a missiological perspective sees the church as having two residences—being residents of earth and heaven. The church's heavenly citizenship implies its highest allegiance and eschatological hope. Paul writes, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV). This loyalty and hope also manifest in the church's present life as residents of the world. The church upholds the mission of establishing God's kingdom on earth. Out of all people groups, diaspora faith communities are most likely the people that best understand this biblical notion. Comparable to their longing to see their homeland again is their yearning finally to enter their heavenly abode. Like their experience of living in two homes is their intention to be faithful ambassadors of heaven while being good citizens of earth. Similar to their opportunity to contribute to the formation of multicultural societies in a foreign land is their mission to reach out and proclaim God's kingdom to their hosts and fellow immigrants.

### All Homes Are Inevitable

Although the two-home worldview is the most ideal an immigrant should have, home theology does not in any way discount the condition where one demonstrates "birdness" or "turtleness." This study has in one way or another reflected and respected the various factors that come into play in this threefold dynamic. First, this study respects the fact that the transition period of just settling in necessitates that one be a bird for a certain period of time in order to adapt more quickly to one's current home. On the other hand, homesickness can force another to focus on building a turtle-home for a while in order to rediscover one's lost home. Another factor can be a specific social location—whether its family, community, economic condition, or social makeup. A particular job,

for example, can force some to be a bird so as to be effective in their career and thus be able to survive financially. Filipino workers who represent American companies need a certain period of time where they could immerse themselves for a while in a typical American lifestyle so as to understand their customers better and thus be better sales representatives. Another example is how Filipino students need to adapt the western style of reasoning, writing, and reciting in order to obtain good grades in schools. In short, home theology reflects the various dynamics of diaspora life where one knows the need for flexibility and learns the value of all homes as it applies to a given suitable context.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis done in Level 2 demonstrated both the strengths and weaknesses of “turtleness” and “birdness.” The dissimilarities between Group 1 and Group 2 do not in anyway suggest that how one home is better than the other. Rather, this comparison reflects the threefold dynamic of building diaspora homes. For example, Group 1 prefers to join a Filipino church while Group 2 prefers a multiethnic church. The first group has the advantage of fellowshiping with fellow Filipinos and focusing their mission with people who are like them. The second group on the other hand benefits more from encountering people of other cultural background. Participants in this group testify of racial inclusiveness in mission, worship and faith life. The Level 2 sessions reveal many ways they are similar in building their homes. Both of the groups recognized the need to learn to balance between preservation and assimilation. According to them this is the most ideal way to cure the malady of homelessness or the identity crisis being experienced in diaspora.

At the end of the study, I sensed that the anxiety brought about by the identity crisis they are experiencing was reduced. They not only realized that their diaspora life is

important to God, being evident in the scriptural passages they have studied, they also were educated about the way they can hear other voices of biblical immigrants in their group study. Furthermore, during the session, the participants gradually understand that to be cured from identity crisis does not mean that one should resolve the struggle between assimilation and preservation; instead, they should make peace with their identity struggle and accept the gift of having two homes and an evolving new cultural identity. Hopefully, as they continue to learn and apply these insights, they will continue to find answers to other identity issues they faced as immigrants.

### Missiological Implications

This section contains significant points where the findings of the study entail recommendation, insights and information that are significantly connected to concerns in the field of missiology. This study affirms the need for missiology to prioritize migration as a subject in mission study and as a mission opportunity for mission agencies and churches located in immigrant-populated places. How the start of 21<sup>st</sup> century migrations shape the social and political structures of the globe is already being told and is seen as significant in the field of missiology.

Theologically, the principles articulated in this study can serve as a small contribution to the current trend of studying migration in the area of mission theology. Theological reflections are critically imperative if missiologists are to be effective in approaching the variety of issues brought by the diaspora phenomenon. Specifically, the theories presented here can be helpful in guiding mission theology students in using scriptural insights in addressing the identity crisis experienced by immigrants. Furthermore, the procedure used here can be adapted as a working model for other

contextual theology projects about diaspora. Although specific details may vary, the general hermeneutical elements applied here are beneficial to other diaspora contexts. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the whole of the Scriptures is a big diaspora narrative. In fact, the Scriptures can be read as under the overarching thematic timeline of diaspora episodes and experiences. Understanding this fact will help churches to be sensitive to the cries of today's diaspora communities and will begin to hear many diaspora voices in the Bible.

Anthropologically, this material is helpful to students who are specifically interested in understanding the cultural makeup of Filipino immigrants. Specifically, the anthropological lens of this study are more focused on the participants' religious worldview and how other cultural components—attitude, practices, ideologies, etc.—interrelate with it. The flow of the procedures in this study points to the reliability of the gathered data and theoretical findings; thus, students in the field of social studies who are captivated with the migration phenomenon can benefit from the research model employed here as a pattern to use in other research projects with other diaspora communities. Furthermore, this study will be useful to those who seek to study migration in the context of colonialism and the various factors that play in it.

Practically, this same material will be helpful to local churches and missionaries who are or will engage in diaspora mission among Filipino immigrants in the United States. Some principles could also be applicable with other immigrant groups or Filipinos who are in other countries. Furthermore, this study is not just useful for missionaries in terms of providing a clear explanation of the culture of Filipino immigrants but can also be found helpful in making gospel presentation material that is contextually relevant to

them. The theological characteristic of this study provides foundational ideas in making the Scriptures relevant to the context of Filipino diaspora communities.

Furthermore, this contextual theology embodies many ways by which the Scriptures provide answers to diaspora concerns. This reflects how important the topic diaspora in the Scriptures, especially the crisis of identity. The intended main readers of this study—Filipino immigrants—will be led to the Scriptures as a source of instruction and inspiration for their diaspora life. It also implies that this contextual theology points to the church as a spiritual community that embodies the love of God for the immigrants. Finally, the fast-paced change that persistently occurs in diaspora life points to the need of consistent follow-up on this topic, so that the theologies constructed here will always be updated and relevant to intended readers. Change always accompanies diaspora communities in the United States due to various factors: the constant flow of people coming in and going out; the culture gap between the first generation of immigrants and their American-born children; the multiethnic society that encompasses the community; and the constant need to assimilate to the American culture, which also demonstrates consistent flux. These factors are important radars that tell us the need to further study this issue and the basic information on how to approach it. Thus, it is recommended that follow up research should be done on this topic.

I conclude this dissertation study in the same way I started it—with a narrative. Here is the continuation of the story of the character I presented in the introduction. As I have said in the beginning, this narrative reflects the experiences of the people who participated in this study.

One Sunday morning, the newly arrived Filipino immigrant was thinking about what the church can do to reach other Filipino immigrants who are experiencing the same crisis she is going through. She heard an announcement from the pulpit of an upcoming topical Bible study about migration. For three consecutive Saturdays, she attended these series of meetings and ardently participated in the interaction. The things she learned after it was over made her so peaceful and hopeful that things will get better for her and the mission life of her church.

First, she learned that to be healed from the crisis she is going through she does not need to constantly strive to resolve her struggle between the pull of assimilating to her new home and the commitment to preserve her homeland ways. She decided to make peace with her identity struggle and embrace the gifts it offers of having “two homes” and a new evolving cultural identity.

Second, she listened to hear the voices of diaspora characters in the Scriptures. By learning to read the Scriptures from the point of view of an immigrant, she became aware of how God shows favor to diasporic communities like her own and discovered that she can read the whole Scriptures as a diaspora narrative.

Third, she understood how the crisis they faced as immigrants can be an occasion for effective mission. She looks forward to continue meeting as a hermeneutical community for the purpose of developing diaspora study materials that other members of their church can use for group meetings. She is also looking forward to getting involved in creating missional tools that their church can use for their outreach program.

She called her family last night and cheerfully shared her recent experiences with her husband. Also, for the first time after almost a year, she heard her 3 year old son call

her *nanay* (mother). Tears of joy flow from her eyes as she savored this wonderful moment.

She opened her mailbox this morning and discovered a response letter from Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) office to the petition application that her employer submitted on her behalf. Enclosed in the envelope is her permanent resident card or also known to many as a green card. She was filled with overflowing happiness as she contemplated that a few years from now, she would be able to petition her family to join her in the United States.

Tonight she will host their weekly group bible study in her small apartment in Jersey City. As she prepared in prayer, for the first time in almost a year of her diasporic life, she felt very strongly that she is not homeless anymore but she is someone who is enjoying the opportunity of having two homes. Instead of just being Filipina, she is now becoming Filipina American.



APPENDIX A  
Profile of the Participants

Group 1: Bible Study Group of First Filipino American UMC

<b>Pseudo-Names</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Regional Birthplace</b>	<b>Years in Residence</b>	<b>Migration Status</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Puno	60	Nueva Ecija	2	Non-immigrant	Pastor
Lita	45	Manila	13	Citizen	Registered Nurse
Enong	50	Cagayan City	20	Citizen	Medical Technologist
Lina	60	Region 3	1 ½	Nonimmigrant	Teacher
Aser	46	La Union	1	Nonimmigrant	Accountant
Neneng	42	Romblon	13	Citizen	Housekeeper
Leo	44	Cebu	14	Citizen	Driver
Ligaya	50	Cagayan	19	Citizen	None (Housewife)
Ada	69	Manila	14	Citizen	Housewife
Greg	65	Bulacan	1	Non-immigrant	Networker
Ariel	44	Batangas	23	Citizen	Computer Operator
Ener	48	Cebu	13	Citizen	Airline Agent
Kay	49	Cagayan	15	Citizen	Registered Nurse

Group 2: Bible Study Group of UMC in Union

<b>Names</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Years in Residence</b>	<b>Migration Status</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Isla	47	Philippines	21	Citizen	Registered Nurse
Freedom	55	Guyana	26	Citizen	Assistant Vice Pres.
Eva	26	Sri Lanka	12	Citizen	Bookkeeper
Bambam	40	Philippines	4	Immigrant	CAD Operator
Lando	48	Philippines	13	Citizen	Lockbox Supervisor
Grasya	48	Philippines	14	Citizen	Registered Nurse
Bobeth	31	Sri Lanka	10	Immigrant	Coordinator/Detailer
Jay	26	Philippines	14	Citizen	Student
Enrique	64	Philippines	18	Citizen	Dietary Aide
Oba	37	Nigeria	9	Citizen	Financial Controller
Iba	34	Nigeria	9	Citizen	Programmer
Abayomi	61	Liberia	36	Citizen	Security Consultant
Manj	54	Philippines	14	Citizen	Real State Salesman
Elen	50	Philippines	16	Citizen	Registered Nurse
Hunyo	52	Philippines	16	Citizen	Medical Technologist
Licia	48	Philippines	20	Citizen	Registered Nurse
Kenshin	23	Philippines	16	Citizen	Computer Technician
Kenji	21	Philippines	18	Citizen	Med. Record Scanner
Tres	52	Philippines	28	Citizen	Supervisor

## APPENDIX B

### The Observation Protocol

Indicated here are the guidelines that were used during observation, interview and analysis that distinguished the important information from those that were irrelevant to the theme and goal of the research. Furthermore, this observation protocol guided me to discern and comply with ethical issues involved in data gathering. This protocol also helped me categorize the information according to its theme and degree of value.

1. Is the information relevant to the goals of the statement of the problem?
2. Does the information reflect Filipinos' postcolonial attitude?
3. Is the information able to contribute to the goal of forming a diaspora theology?
4. Is the information verifiable?
5. Is the information too confidential to use even if the person remains anonymous?
6. Does the information reflect a unique characteristic of Filipino Methodism?
7. Does the information carry legal implications that could incriminate or harm the participants?
8. Is the information a result of leading questions or research manipulation or was the question presented objectively?
9. Is the information on my field notes records of gathered data or already my personal commentaries?
10. Is the impreciseness of a certain data a result of my own lack of clarity in presenting a question?
11. Is the source of the information reliable or not?
12. Is the information factual or opinion-based?
13. Is the information a result of an informal conversation or of a standardized formal interview?

APPENDIX CScriptural Study Guide

*Buhay Dayuhan* (Life as a Foreigner)  
A Series of Scriptural Study and Group Reflection  
on Filipino Diasporic Identity

1 The Diaspora People and their Economic Flight (Gen.

47:1-12; 13-26; Exo. 1:1-22)

II. The Diaspora People and their Cultural Identity (Dan. 1: 1-21)

III. The Diaspora People and the Gospel (Acts 2; 8:1-4; 11:19)

IV. The Diaspora People and their Homeland (Neh. 1: 1-11)

- This is a Bible Study guide that ushers participants into biblical reflection and discussion. The guide is designed for Filipino/Filipino Americans who are currently residing in the U.S.
- The central theme of the study is cultural identity in the context of diaspora.
- This activity is a part of a research project conducted by Ferdinand Llenado in partial fulfillment of the degree Doctor of Missiology. Thus, all data will be used according to the goal and requirement of the mentioned research.

I. The Diaspora People and their Economic Flight (Gen. 47:1-12; 13-26; Exo. 1:1-22)

- a. According to Genesis 47:4, why did Joseph's family migrate to Egypt? If not for economic reasons, do you think they would still want to transfer to a foreign land?
- b. Does Joseph's decision to make slaves out of those who begged for food raise ethical and moral questions on the issue of compassion versus subjugation? (See 47:18-21).
- c. Jacob and his family were treated well in Egypt (47:6) as immigrants, but other famine survivors were treated as slaves (47:21). Do you see this story as a similar depiction of current Filipino immigrants—some are treated well, some are not?
- d. Jacob's clan kept their jobs as shepherds in a land where shepherding is despised (47:1-6). How does this reflect the current job opportunity or "profession-downgrading" of Filipino professionals when they live in the U.S.?
- e. In the Exodus account, the treatment of the Egyptians with the Israelites gradually changed from accommodating to slavery (Exod. 1:8-11). Describe from your own perspective, how the treatment of Filipino immigrants in the U.S. has gone from good to bad or vice versa.
- f. How do you see the experience of Filipinos migrating to the U.S. as parallel to the experience of Joseph, Jacob and the rest of the family migrating to Egypt? What are the specific points of similarity?
- g. Does this scriptural story somehow justify Filipinos' massive migration in spite of the great ramification embedded in diaspora life—ramifications such as exploitation, abuse, identity crisis, family separation, etc.?

## II. The Diaspora People and their Cultural Identity (Dan. 1:1-21)

- a. Verses 4-5, describes how the young Israelites who were chosen to serve the king were educated for three years with the literature and language of the Chaldeans. How do you think this affected their cultural identity and ideology as Jews?
- b. In this story, how did God vindicate Daniel and his four friends' commitment to refuse what was commanded them, regarding instead their Jewish values concerning defilement? (see vs. 15).
- c. When did Daniel try to preserve his cultural identity, and where are the points that he assimilated to the culture of Babylon? (see vs. 1:5b and 1:8).
- d. Do you think compromising one's cultural identity in order to assimilate into the culture of a host country is religiously wrong? Why or why not?
- e. In your experience, what are the cultural elements that you have compromised in order to assimilate into American culture, and what are the cultural elements that you have preserved?
- f. Like Daniel, do you ever experience racial persecution when you are trying to safeguard or express your cultural identity? How do you respond?
- g. Is your Filipino cultural identity being expressed in the church where you belong? If the answer is yes, how is this expression beneficial to your own spirituality, and how does this benefit the church as a whole?
- h. In finding the balance between assimilation and preservation, which is most advantageous for Filipinos—to join a multicultural church or to join an all-Filipino church?

## III. The Diaspora People and the Gospel (Acts 2: 8:1-4; 11:19)

- a. Acts 2:9-11 mentions that the Jews from around the world were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. What do we know from history that explains why so many Jews were living outside their homeland?
- b. The first converts during the Pentecost event were visitors from different parts of the world. How did this condition help in spreading the gospel?
- c. Because of the Spirit's intervention, the Gospel was heard in languages that everyone understands. Do you think the gospel was brought to the Philippines by Western missionaries in languages, symbols, or cultural ways that the people can understand?
- d. In chapters 8 and 11, do you think the believers would have come out of Jerusalem to spread the gospel if the persecution had not happened?
- e. How many of you think that you have a responsibility to reach out to your kababayan who are struggling in their lives here in the U.S.? What specific types of ministries or mission can the church offer to immigrants?
- f. In the aspect of evangelism, do you think a monocultural church is better off to stay as a monocultural church? How will this affect its evangelism efforts? What factors must be considered if a monocultural church would be better off shifting to a multicultural church?
- g. Many testify that in their diaspora life, they have become more receptive to religious things and eventually accepted the gospel. Why do you think so? Have you known somebody who experienced deeper spirituality because of migration?

#### IV. The Diaspora People and their Homeland (Neh. 1:1-11)

- a. What was Nehemiah's reaction when he heard the condition of the Jews who had escaped captivity? (see vs. 4).
- b. How did God use Nehemiah's social position in the Persian Empire to mediate on behalf of his devastated native land? (see 2:4-7).
- c. In spite of Nehemiah's comfortable position in a wealthy foreign land, why do you think his heart was still in his homeland? Do we feel the same grief as Nehemiah with regard to the economic, social, and political conditions of the Philippines?
- d. What are the factors that help you stay connected with your homeland? How do these factors help in preserving your cultural identity?
- e. What does a "broken wall" represent in the Nehemiah story? Using your interpretation of the "broken wall," how will the wall in the Philippines be rebuilt and what role should be played by Filipino immigrants in realizing this rebuilding?
- f. Is going back to the Philippines part of your plan? Why or why not? What kind of "Nehemiah ministry" can you do or are you presently doing for your homeland without totally going back?
- g. Unlike Daniel, who decided not to defile himself with the food and wine set by the king, Nehemiah took wine set before him each time because he was a cupbearer to the king. When is being a "Daniel" who sets up boundaries to avoid denying a cultural heritage appropriate? When is being a "Nehemiah" who risks relegating one's cultural identity for the purpose of assimilation appropriate?

## APPENDIX D

### Sampling Procedures for Choosing Participants

Rationale for the Selection of Criteria. The rationale for making the first and second criteria is related to the purpose of establishing credibility for data that will represent the character of the group or the church. Secondly it provides a more relaxed and familiar fellowship environment during the study sessions. The third and fourth criteria establish the participants' ability to relate personally to the theme due to firsthand migration experience.

#### For the First Level

Purposive Sampling. My sampling procedure is purposive or theoretical. Meaning, the factors through which the sample is drawn is nonrandom but link to the overarching theme of the study. The sample selection was conceptually driven by the problem and theoretical framework of the research study.

1. Participants should be members of the church chosen.
2. Participants should already be regular attendees of an existing group Bible study in the church chosen.
3. Participants should be residing in the U.S. at least one year.
4. Participants have experienced firsthand migration.
5. Participants should be willing to go to the second level if offered by the researcher.
6. Participants should be willing to participate in the study and sign the *Informed Consent Form*.

#### For the Second Level

Again, the sampling procedure was purposive or theoretical.

1. Participants should be all Filipinos.
2. Participants have exhibited a more in-depth and experiential knowledge of Filipino culture during the first level sessions.
3. Participants have exhibited a more advanced knowledge of Scriptures as compared to other members of the Bible study group during the first level sessions.

Rationale for the Selection of Criteria. The rationale for the first and second criteria is because the contextual theology is about Filipino culture. Other nationalities joined in one of the two groups on the first level only because I also needed to observe Filipinos in a multiethnic setting. The rationale for the third criterion is due to the objective of the research to have an in-depth study of diaspora texts in the Bible; however, as explained earlier, some of the people whom I invited to participate in the session were not able attend.

## APPENDIX E

### Outline of the Second Level Session Data Analysis—Interpretation Level

Prior to the session, I studied the information generated from Level 1 sessions (Scriptural Study and Group Reflection), articulated the central themes of cultural identity in the context of diaspora and arranged them according to easily understood cultural text categories. I presented these to the participants and for each point I gave a concise review of how the texts emerged from their discussions.

Everyone affirmed the relevance of the themes to their lives. I also asked them follow-up questions related to the specific context of each theme. In some cases, I also read biblical passages that were related to the topic. I concluded by asking one general question for each of the themes: *Is this cultural theme a necessity or optional in diaspora life?*

However, I was not able to use some of the questions listed below because most of them were already answered in Level 1 meetings. Rather, I asked questions that are not listed here because they just emerged during the meeting from discussion.

#### 1. Spirituality.

Q: Has anyone of your kids express confusion whether they are Filipinos or Americans?

#### 2. The Worldview of Two Homes

Q: Do you think the uniqueness of your culture is evident to other cultural groups?

#### 3. Adaptability to a Multiracial Environment

Q: Do you think the uniqueness of your own culture is evident to other cultural groups?

#### 4. *Damayán*

Q: Ten being the highest, how do you rate the *damayan* attitude of Filipinos here in the town of Union?

#### 5. Preservation of Good Culture

Q: What are examples of cultural traits and perspectives that are in conflict with scriptural principles?

#### 6. Connection to Homeland

Q: Name some of the biblical diaspora characters who have maintained connection with their homeland and cite a lesson that we could learn from them.

#### 7. Toughness

Q: Is the Filipino culture of *hiya* a weakness or strength?

#### 8. Morality

Q: Who have a better construct of morality—Filipinos or Americans?

#### 9. Respect for the Elderly

Q: What verses in the Scriptures admonish respect for the elderly?

#### 10. Close Familial Ties

Q: Have you observed any example of family ties in any Bible stories?

#### 11. Recognition of the Providence of God.

Q: We testify that God called us to migrate to the U.S., but what are the factors that imply that it is not advisable and good for someone to migrate?

12. Expression of Culture in Faith and Worship

Q: What cultural elements are expressed in the way Paul instructed churches in any of his writings?

13. Struggle for Equality

Q: What elements in Filipino worship gatherings have you not seen here in the U.S.?

14. Connectionalism

Q: Did you experience a warm welcome as a Methodist into a Methodist church here in the US because you were a Methodist in the Philippines?



## APPENDIX F

### Interview Questions

1. How long have you been staying here in the United States?
2. What brought you to the U.S.?

### 2 Perspectives and Attitudes Questions

3. Have you experienced what many immigrants testify that one rediscovers and appreciate his/her culture more when he/she goes abroad?
4. Are there any ideologies, ethics, customs or sets of beliefs here in the U.S. that are offending to you?
5. Was there any “reality tunnel” that you have prior your migration but was changed due to the influence of this culture?
6. In the Philippines, do you believe in the spirit world (folk beliefs)? If yes, did it changed now? Why?
7. Do you feel that the U.S. culture is more superior than the Filipino culture?

### II. Actions and Practices Questions

8. Why did you join a Filipino Church or Multiethnic Church?
9. In the struggle between assimilation versus preservation, to which do you incline more?
10. What attitude or behavior did you develop in your immigrant life?
11. Have you ever thought of going back home? Why or why not?
12. Do you ever feel ashamed to be known as a Filipino? Why?
13. Do you feel offended or defensive when someone is changing your cultural ways?

14. Do you still feel like an outsider in this society?
15. What is your definition of success?
16. Do you ever feel guilty in times that you are more an American than a Filipino?
17. From 1-10, 10 being the highest, how do you rate Filipinos' communal life in this area? (*Damayan* (sharing) or *bayanihan* (helping one another) can be considered Specific positive Filipino attitude.
18. Can you identify any negative Filipino traits that are weakening the Filipino community in this area? (Crab mentality, back biting, over sensitivity, etc.).

### III. "Theological points" questions

19. How did religion play a role in your decision to migrate? Did your faith strengthen you to migrate? Do you think it is God's will that you are here?
20. Do you think it is God's will that you remain as a Filipino church or do you see possibilities in the future that you will become multiethnic?
21. Is it a sin to forget one's culture?
22. What is your mental depiction of Jesus?
23. When you pray, do you pray in *Tagalog* or English?
24. What can the Filipino church contribute to the American church?

### 3 "Perspective as hermeneutical tool" questions

25. Among the biblical diaspora characters we have studied, to whom you can relate most with?

26. Do you think Jonah was a successful missionary?
27. Did Joseph do the right thing in producing slaves out of desperate people?
28. Do you think it was easy for Peter to enter a Gentiles' house?
29. How do you see Jesus as an immigrant?
30. Has the American church taught you how to interpret the Scriptures differently in the way you know it before?

#### 4 Methodism

31. Do Filipinos in coming here to the U.S., carry with them a Filipino version of Methodism?
32. What can Filipino Methodists contribute to American Methodism?

#### 5 "Hidden Theologies" questions

33. Do you feel the need to express the Filipino culture in worship, ministry and mission?
34. Which among God's many characters have you experienced most frequently as an immigrant?
35. What religious beliefs or spiritual practices have strengthened you to endure the struggles of migration?
36. Do you sometimes feel the need to read the *Tagalog Bible*?

APPENDIX G

Guide Questions for the Analysis of Culture

- 6 Are there any Filipino cultural ways which are easily forgotten in diaspora life?
5. Are there any Filipino cultural ways that remain even after many years in diaspora life?
6. What specific cultural values unite the Filipino community in this area?
7. On the other hand, do any negative Filipino cultural values damage the Filipino diaspora community?
8. Are Filipinos able to more easily to American culture as compared to other immigrant groups?
9. Do you observe any indications that the uniqueness of the participants' cultural identity is evident to other cultural groups?
10. With the participants I studied, do any "American born children" (or youth) demonstrate a longing to study their Filipino heritage?
11. How is a Filipino cultural value transformed when brought abroad? In other words, how are the Filipino diaspora cultural traits and perspectives different from or similar to the Filipino cultural traits and perspectives back home?
12. Is there any Filipino worldview employed—consciously or unconsciously—as a lens in the observation and interpretation of Scriptures?
13. Are all the Filipino cultural values observed able to pass scriptural standards?

APPENDIX HInformed Consent Form

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Your participation is voluntary which means you can choose to accept or refuse. Do not hesitate to ask the researcher if you need further information about the study. The contact information is indicated below. Please read this consent form carefully before deciding to participate. If you have decided to accept, sign the authorization section in the last page of this form.

## The Researcher

Name: Ferdinand Llenado

Institution: Asbury Theological Seminary

Course: Doctor in Missiology

Contact Information: Office: 908-687-8077  
Home: 908-686-2412

## The Research Study

Title: Developing a Contextual Theology of Postcolonial Filipino American Diasporic Identity

Goal: The initial phase of this research is to study the condition of Filipinos' cultural identity as immigrants in United States, particularly focusing on their religious worldview and practices as formed in the whole process of migration. With this information, I will then identify missiological elements that are essential in developing a contextual theology reflective and receptive to the concerns of Filipinos in diaspora.

## The Mechanics:

1. In this study, I will use the research method of participant observation, focus groups , and interview.
2. The focus groups will be done in two levels of meetings having two different small groups in the first level and one combined group in the second.
3. The first level is called observation level and is focused more on observation or the gathering of data. Here, I intend to observe two Bible study groups. One is a Filipino Bible study group of a Filipino congregation; the other is a Bible study group of a multiethnic congregation having a community of Filipinos in it. The method is comparative analysis.

4. The second level of group meeting is combined meetings and is more focused on interpretation. From the people in the two groups in the first level, I will choose 15-20 research participants who will take part in a much smaller core group who will join me in the process of interpretation as a hermeneutical community. Half of the participants from the second group will be interviewed. In addition to individual interviews, I will also conduct group interviews.

5. In both types of group meetings and during interviews, I will also use video or audio recorders.

### Your Participation

1. You will be asked to be one of the participants of a group Bible study of your own church. As you study together, you will be observed by the researcher noting data that is relevant to the goal and theme of the research.

2. About five of the participants in the Bible study group will be asked to join a core group that will function as a hermeneutical community or group interpreters together with the researcher.

3. Some of you will also be asked to be interviewed either individually or as a group.

### The Timeline

In the first level, you will attend two Bible study sessions. If you are chosen and if you agree to be part of the second level, you will be asked to attend another session as part of the core group. If you are chosen and if you consent for an interview, you will be interviewed once or twice as need arise.

### Confidentiality

Your identity in this research study will be treated in strict confidentiality. To assure discretion, participants will be given pseudonyms. Data will be stored securely and is only accessible to the researcher. Furthermore, any video/audio recording will be offered to participants, either to be returned or destroyed. All measures will be taken to assure that all contribution will remain anonymous and discreet.

### Your Right to Discontinue

The researcher respects the right of a participant who wishes to discontinue from participating in the study. Please properly notify the researcher if such decision arises. Participants are encouraged to continue their participation, however, for the sake of a thorough and complete research outcome.

### Your Right to Receive a Copy.

The participants will also be offered to receive a comprehensive summary of the research findings upon completion. You can also request a copy of the comprehensive summary before it is handed in so that you will have the opportunity to suggest changes if needed.

Authorization

I have read and understand this consent form and I voluntarily participate in this research study to be conducted by Ferdinand Llenado. I also understand that I will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX IFollow-Up QuestionnaireDeveloping a Diaspora Contextual Theology for Filipino ImmigrantsBasic Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudoname: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please provide an *alias* so that you will remain anonymous in this study)

Current Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of residence in the U.S.: \_\_\_\_\_

What translation of the Bible do you prefer most? \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions for Reflection

- Most of the questions are scriptural. Please use a Bible if necessary.
- You can answer in *Tagalog* or English or *Tag-lish*
- This is not a 5-minute questionnaire. Please sit down and enjoy. It will take you about 30 minutes.

2. Among the immigrants in the Bible, to whom can you best relate your life?

Encircle the letter that corresponds to the closest answer.

- a. Joseph, who was mistreated before, but was promoted by God;
- b. Esther, who fights for the rights of immigrants;
- c. Nehemiah, whose main concern is to help loved ones back home;
- d. Paul, who sees migration as an opportunity to reach out and help other immigrants.

Explain your answer briefly:

3. Most of you claim that it was God's plan for you to migrate so you can help your family back home. In essence, you are like Nehemiah. What was Nehemiah's project? You can review the book of Nehemiah. Encircle the letter that corresponds to the closest answer.

- a. Rebuild the broken temple.
- b. Rebuild the broken wall.
- c. Gather his dispersed people.

4. The group affirmed that spirituality is developed further in the life of most Filipino immigrants when confronted by the difficulties of migration. Can you cite one Bible



character whose spirituality strengthened him or her to face the difficulties of migration? Explain briefly.

5. What was one of the most practical reasons why Daniel became a successful immigrant? You can review Daniel, chapter 1.

Encircle the letter that corresponds to the closest answer.

- a. Daniel knew how to play politics.
- b. Daniel's physical features resemble a local Babylonian.
- c. Daniel was able to assimilate to the host culture without denying his own culture.

6. In a multicultural gathering during Pentecost, when the Spirit came to the disciples, they declared the wonders of God in the dialects of the people present (Acts 2).

Reflecting on this, what is your preference:

5.a. ...in hearing the preaching of the Word of God? (Encircle the letter that corresponds to the closest answer.)

- 1. *Tagalog*
- 2. Your own regional dialect
- 3. *Tagalog-English*
- 4. *English-Tagalog*
- 5. English
- 6. It does not matter.

5.b. ...in your personal Bible reading? (Encircle the letter that corresponds to the closest answer.)

- 1. *Tagalog*
- 2. Your own regional dialect
- 3. *Tagalog-English*
- 4. *English-Tagalog*
- 5. English
- 6. It does not matter.

Explain briefly your answers.

7. In Ruth chapter 2, Ruth, a foreigner, was allowed to glean in the fields of Boaz and was given a decent welcome, a decent job and decent profits. How does this reflect the current policy concerning the employment of immigrants in the U.S.A.? Are you satisfied or not satisfied? Explain why.

8. Leviticus 19:32 says, “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord” (NIV). With this in mind, please rate the degree of respect expressed by Filipino American youths (whom you know) with the elderly?

1 = poor, and 5 = excellent

1	2	3	4	5
Poor				Excellent

(When I asked you *what is the most important cultural value or behavior that you intend to keep*, 98% of you said, “Respect for the elderly”.)

9. Do you practice the Filipino cultural trait, *close familial ties* here in the U.S.? Why or why not?

10. Throughout all the study sessions, 14 Filipino American immigrant cultural themes emerged. Rank the cultural themes according to importance: 1 = most important and 14 = least important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Spirituality

\_\_\_\_\_ The Worldview of Two Homes (Finding the balance between assimilation and preservation)

\_\_\_\_\_ Adaptability to a Multiracial Environment

\_\_\_\_\_ *Damayan*

\_\_\_\_\_ Continuance of Good Culture

\_\_\_\_\_ Connection to Homeland

\_\_\_\_\_ Toughness

\_\_\_\_\_ Close Familial Ties

\_\_\_\_\_ Connectionalism (Being part of a church that is connected to the homeland church)

\_\_\_\_\_ Morality

\_\_\_\_\_ Respect for the Elderly

\_\_\_\_\_ Recognition of the providence of God  
(Recognizing that God authored your migration)

\_\_\_\_\_ Expression of Culture in Faith and Worship

\_\_\_\_\_ Struggle for Equality

APPENDIX J

Summary of the Participants' Answers to the Follow-Up Questionnaire:  
Developing a Contextual Theology for Filipino Immigrants

(See separate page)

Information was gathered for focus group Level 3 from 14 of the 20 participants at the United Methodist Church in Union and First Filipino American United Methodist Church. It is reported here.

The same information in a preliminary form was shared with the two focus groups during a final joint meeting at Page Family's residence.

A final summation of the information from the questionnaire was compiled on October 10, 2006. It appears as a table on the following pages as Developing a Diaspora Contextual Theology for Filipino Immigrants.

**Summary of the Participants Answer to the Follow-Up Questionnaire  
Developing a *Diaspora Contextual Theology for Filipino Immigrants***

<b>Names</b>	<b>Biblical immigrant story that resembles your experience</b>	<b>Biblical immigrant who inspired your spirituality</b>	<b>Preferred language in hearing a sermon</b>	<b>Preferred language in reading the Bible</b>	<b>Current U.S. employment policy for immigrants</b>	<b>Respect of Filipino American youth</b>	<b>Do you practice close familial ties?</b>	<b>Rank of cultural texts: F = First L = Last</b>
Greg	Paul	Daniel	No Preference	No Preference	Satisfied & Not Satisfied	1-Very Poor	Yes	F: God's providence; L: Toughness
Ener	Paul	Joseph	English-Tagalog	English	Satisfied	4-Satisfactory	Yes	F: God's providence L: Toughness
Kay	Nehemiah	Paul	English-Tagalog	English-Tagalog	Satisfied & not satisfied	4-Satisfactory	Yes	F: God's providence L: Toughness
Ligaya	Paul	Ruth	Tagalog-English	Tagalog-English	Satisfied	4-Satisfactory	Yes	F: Spirituality L: Toughness
Enong	Paul	Daniel	English-Tagalog	Tagalog-English	Satisfied	5-Excellent	Yes	F: Spirituality L: Two homes
Hunyo	Nehemiah	Joseph	No Preference	English-Tagalog	Satisfied	3-Fair	Yes	F: Spirituality; L: Adaptability
Helen	Nehemiah	Joseph	No Preference	English-Tagalog	Satisfied	4-Satisfactory	Yes	F: Spirituality L: Adaptability
Kenshin			English	English	Satisfied	4-Satisfactory	Yes	

Names	Biblical immigrant story that resembles your experience	Biblical immigrant who inspired your spirituality	Preferred language in hearing a sermon	Preferred language in reading the Bible	Current U.S. employment policy for immigrants	Respect of Filipino American youth	Do you practice close familial ties?	Rank of cultural texts: F = First L = Last
Licia	Nehemiah		English-Tagalog	English-Tagalog	Satisfied	5-Excellent	Yes	F: God's providence; L: Toughness
Tres	Nehemiah		English-Tagalog	English-Tagalog	Satisfied	5-Excellent	Yes	F: God's providence L: Connectionalism
Kenji			English-Tagalog	English-Tagalog	Satisfied	4-Satisfactory	Yes	F: Close Familial ties; L: <i>Damayán</i>
Enrique	Nehemiah	Daniel	English	English	Not satisfied	4-Satisfactory		F: Morality L: Toughness
Manj	Esther	Peter	No preference	No preference	Not satisfied	2-Poor	Yes and no	F: Continuance of good culture L: Toughness
Bambam	Nehemiah	Joseph	Own regional dialect	Own regional dialect	Satisfied	3-Fair	Yes	1 <sup>st</sup> -God's providence L: Struggle for equality

- The respondents are only those who are participants of the second level.
- Out of the 20 participants selected for survey in the follow-up questionnaire, only 14 responded.
- The respondents are all Filipinos. Names below are pseudonyms.
- The questions represented in this chart are found in Appendix H.

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Doug

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Enong

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Isla

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Focus Group Sessions and Follow-Up Questionnaire

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2006      *The Diaspora People and Their Economic Flight*, Bible Study. Union, New Jersey, March 11, 2006.

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2006      *The Diaspora People and their Economic Flight*, Bible Study. Union, NJ, April 2, 2006.

2006      *The Diaspora People and the Gospel*, Bible Study. Union, NJ, April 9, 2006.

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Summary of the Participants' Answer to the Follow up Questionnaire

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Compiled October 10. (See Appendix J)





